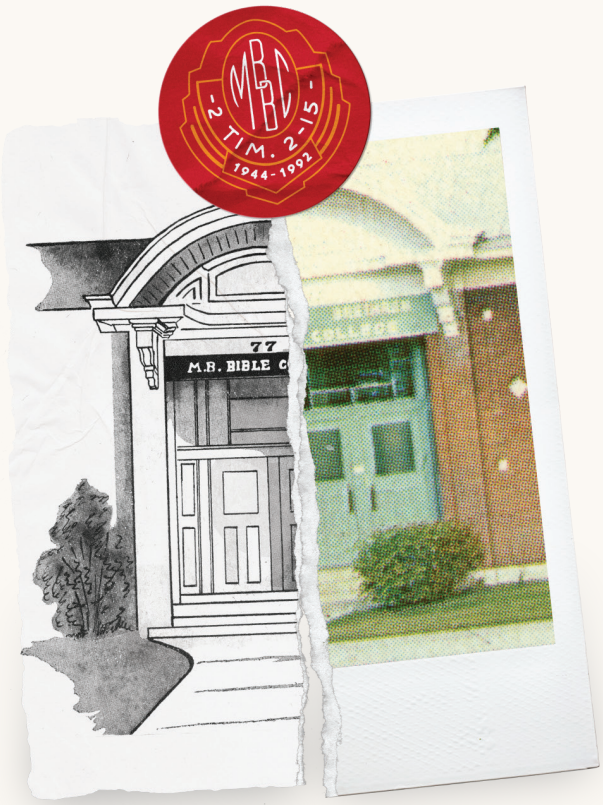
ABE J. DUECK



Mennonite Brethren Bible College

A HISTORY OF COMPETING VISIONS

Mennonite Brethren Bible College

"In this thorough study of MBBC's 48-year history, Abe Dueck reveals the enthusiasm Mennonite Brethren had for education, alongside their almost constant disagreement about what kind of education it should be. This is a story populated by dynamic and influential personalities, robust debate, debilitating tension, but also reminders of God's gracious blessing on the school and of its enormous contribution to the life of the Canadian MB Church."

—**Dora Dueck**, author and former *Mennonite Brethren Herald* editorial staff, Delta, BC

"Abe Dueck, one time faculty and academic dean, deserves wide recognition for his courage and candor. His study of the Mennonite Brethren Bible College will be of interest to anyone familiar with the once flag-ship denominational center. As the title implies, throughout its history, the school struggled to find an identity acceptable to its supporting constituency, itself subject to a constantly shifting cultural milieu. Baffling for administrators and faculty alike was finding a healthy balance between theology and liberal arts or conceptualizing an acceptable divide between undergraduate and graduate offerings. Often surfacing in this study is the tension confronting the college in fine-tuning a music culture that would attract constituency approval. Dueck's meticulous study offers not only a compelling narrative of MBBC but also a skillful analysis of the issues that throughout most of its existence threatened the health of the college and ultimately caused its demise."

—**David Giesbrecht**, former librarian at Columbia Bible College, Abbottsford, BC

"A well-researched, thorough, and comprehensive behind-the-scenes exploration of the creation, convictions, conflicts, and controversies that shaped, encouraged, and impeded the development and growth of MBBC. It will be of interest to former students—who will have missed most or all of the intrigue, controversy, and conflict that occurred outside of the classrooms during their years at the College—along with others interested in the relationship between higher education and Christian faith, especially around issues related to interpreting the Bible and engaging the world."

—**John Longhurst** (MBBC grad 1979), religion reporter and columnist, *Winnipeg Free Press*

"Dueck tells the fascinating story of the personalities, cultural dynamics, and theological issues that shaped the identity and legacy of MBBC. In the recounting of the history of MBBC, he also provides an intriguing perspective on many of the creative tensions that shaped the larger Mennonite Brethren Church over the years and that continue to impact the denomination to this day."

—**Karen Heidebrecht Thiessen** (MBBC grad 1987), Dean of Students, Columbia Bible College, Abbotsford, and former MB pastor

"In this highly readable history of Mennonite Brethren Bible College, church historian Abe J. Dueck, lays out a narrative of vision and hope, and he does so with honesty, care to detail, and his own love for this nexus of learning. Notably, he accounts for the remarkable energy in college-level Christian education within the Mennonite Brethren church in Canada. As remarkable was the change of an immigrant church's educational agenda for its youth in a new land to one advancing the Anabaptist Vision and a socially integrated Christianity in a new urban world."

—**Royden Loewen**, former Chair in Mennonite Studies, University of Winnipeg

"Drawing on careful research, Dueck details the evolving and competing interests that made MBBC a remarkable school with an outsized impact on Mennonite Brethren people and churches. He describes the college's successes and notable leaders, but also details its conflicts and detractors. This book sheds a probing light on the diverse and conflicting interests that not only created—and ultimately ended—MBBC, but also made Canada's Mennonite Brethren what they are today."

—**Andrew Dyck**, Asst. Professor of Christian Spirituality and Pastoral Ministry, MB Seminary and Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg

"For past students of MBBC, whose memories of school drama may center on dorm life, sports tournaments, student socials, or choir tours on spring break, this almost 50-year chronicle of the concerns and decisions of the various presidents, faculty, and board members that played out behind closed doors is truly an eye-opener. While specific to one private college, this institutional record is a case study within that much wider Canadian phenomenon: the turbulent road to assimilation experienced by so many minority cultural groups, as valiant efforts at preserving a vision and identity gradually give way to internal factions and the steadily eroding forces of mainstream tides."

—**Frieda Esau Klippenstein**, Historian, Parks Canada

"Sometimes outsiders perceive institutions as being strong, unassailable entities that will never crumble; they will withstand any storm of controversy or bad behaviour. Abe Dueck's account of the MBBC story combines significant research with an insider perspective. Dueck's MBBC history is important because it shows how fragile institutions are. Even when there is no overwhelming controversy or bad behaviour (no sexual or financial scandals of epic proportions here), institutions can fall simply when a group of good people with good intentions disagree on vision and mandate."

—**Patricia Janzen Loewen**, Assistant Professor of History, Providence University College, Otterburne, MB

Mennonite Brethren Bible College:

A History of Competing Visions

by
Abe J. Dueck

Kindred Productions

Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

Mennonite Brethren Bible College: A History of Competing Visions

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To Kathy,
in loving memory

Contents

Preface / xi
Introduction / xv

Part I
No Other Foundation

1. A Vision Emerges, 1939–1944 / 1
2. The Founding President: Abraham H. Unruh, 1944–1945 / 9
3. Consolidation and Expansion: J. B. Toews, 1945–1948 / 13
4. A Period of Stability: Henry H. Janzen, 1948–1956 / 28
5. An Anabaptist College: John A. Toews, 1956–1963 / 39
6. Unsettling Signs: Jacob H. Quiring, 1963–1967 / 55

Part II
Mid-Life Crisis: Will MBBC Survive?

7. Back to Basics: Victor Adrian, 1967–1972 / 64
8. An Interim President: John Regehr, 1972–1974 / 95

Part III
Renewed Search for a Credible Vision

9. Redefining MBBC: Henry Krahn, 1974–1984 / 103
10. Navigating a Middle Course: David Ewert, 1982–1988 / 122
11. The Final Years of MBBC: James Pankratz, 1988–1992 / 145
12. From Concord College to Canadian Mennonite University / 162

Part IV
Looking Back: MBBC and
Canadian Mennonite Brethren Higher Education

13. A History of Competing Visions / 167
14. The Legacy of MBBC / 199

List of Faculty Members / 205
References / 209
Index of Names and Subjects / 213

Preface

I have been directly associated with the Mennonite Brethren Bible College for more than 25 years, first as a student (1959–1961), then as a faculty member (1966–1968; 1971–1992), and as academic dean for 15 years. I have invested most of my professional life at MBBC. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that I have reflected much on what that history has meant for me and for the Mennonite Brethren denomination that MBBC served.

Writing about the college's history has been a very intense and rewarding experience but also difficult and very personal. As is so often the case, those who are closest to an event or experience have memories and insights that others may not be privy to. But they are also likely to have biases and blind spots that those on the outside may easily detect. A number of former colleagues and friends have encouraged me to write the history of MBBC, but they may have envisioned a different focus. While I have written this story by using the extensive documentation that is available at the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies in Winnipeg, I have obviously been selective in what I have included or excluded.

I have sometimes referred to this project as a history of MBBC, but it is not comprehensive in scope and does not cover all aspects of MBBC's history. There are many important components—such as student life, detailed statistical analyses of enrolments, alumni, faculty, and other aspects—that I have not included. The story of the music department and its contribution to the life of the school and to the local and broader constituency could be the subject of a separate study. To do justice to a broader history would have required extensive travel and interviews with individuals associated with MBBC across Canada and around the world; this would have stretched me beyond my capacity.

The focus of this project pertains to the vision or purpose of MBBC as it was conceived in the early 1940s and as it evolved and became an

issue of intense disagreement and conflict through the years. MBBC was the main program supported by the Canadian Mennonite Brethren conference during the college's existence, and, as such, its story is also in large measure the story of the conference as a whole. The theology, worship, and polity of the conference are reflected in the discussions and often heated debates that transpired from year to year concerning the nature of the college.

The main sources of information concerning this drama are the detailed reports and minutes of the college boards or committees (later Board of Higher Education), the proceedings of the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, and the administrative and faculty minutes and related documents. In addition to these, there are many other documentary sources that I consulted, such as reports in denominational newspapers and magazines, letters, college catalogues, yearbooks of convention proceedings, faculty council minutes, biographies, and autobiographies.

The story of MBBC as it is told in these pages seeks to be true to the complexities of the issues that impinged on MBBC's development. My attempt has been to be honest about the failures and difficulties. Anniversary publications of institutions often portray their history in glowing terms, omitting the ugly. Probably, all institutions, both Christian and secular, have had serious conflicts and crises in their history. Many institutions have succumbed to disruptive forces either because of internal problems or because of changing circumstances beyond their control. MBBC had its share of both. But it is undeniable that—despite the serious conflicts within and without—MBBC made an incredibly positive contribution to the Mennonite Brethren denomination and to the broader society during the approximately half-century of its sojourn. For much of its history, MBBC graduates and alumni occupied leadership positions in the denomination as pastors, musicians, Bible school and high school teachers, and as lay leaders. Their influence was also felt by other denominations, such as the Evangelical Mennonite Conference, Baptist groups, and others. And some former students have also left the church.

The story as told here is, therefore, limited in its scope and in its insights. Hopefully, it will lead to a better understanding of the college itself and also of the forces that shaped the Mennonite Brethren constituency in Canada as a whole. MBBC was not the end of the story of Mennonite Brethren higher education in Canada. The institutions that followed (Concord College and Canadian Mennonite University)

developed in ways that took into account and built on many of the experiences, characteristics, and strengths of the founding colleges, including MBBC.

I would like to thank the many who have read parts or the entire manuscript and have contributed their insights, pointed out errors, and made other suggestions. Some have been students or colleagues of mine at MBBC. In particular, I would like to thank Wally Kroeker, Harold Jantz, James Pankratz, Eleanor Martens, Gerald Gerbrandt, Bill and Irmgard Baerg, Cheryl Pauls, and my daughter, Rachelle Buller, for their comments and suggestions. Ultimately, I take responsibility for what appears in the pages that follow.

I also want to thank Jon Isaak, the executive director of the Mennonite Brethren Historical Commission, for his enthusiastic support and diligent work in editing the manuscript. He repeatedly assured me that the story had to be told. I thank the Historical Commission for agreeing to publish this work. I have spent many rewarding years working with the Historical Commission in its efforts to promote greater awareness and understanding of the history of the Mennonite Brethren Church.

Finally, I am especially grateful to my wife, Kathy, who passed away in January 2018. She faithfully stood by me even when things were difficult. She had a deep appreciation for MBBC and for the friends she made there, first as a student and later as my partner while I served as a faculty member and as academic dean. The loss of MBBC and the close-knit community that had developed over time was deeply felt. I dedicate this work to her memory. I am also thankful to my children—Jonathan, Rachelle, and Judith, and their spouses and families—for their continued love and support.

Introduction

When World War II broke out in 1939, Canadian Mennonite Brethren consisted of several groups with somewhat different backgrounds shaping their identity. These groups form the backdrop for the story of the Mennonite Brethren Bible College.

The Canadian context

The first Mennonite Brethren church in Canada was organized in Burwalde, Manitoba, near Winkler in 1888. The group began as a result of missionary efforts by American Mennonite Brethren. The converts were from other Mennonite groups, often referred to as *Kanadier*, who had settled in Canada after migrating to southern Manitoba from Russia in the 1870s. Among the early converts were the parents of Abram A. Kroeker, who later became prominent as a founder and supporter of the Winkler Bible School (Peniel), as well as of the Mennonite Brethren Bible College (MBBC) in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The church grew slowly for the next several decades, and, by 1907, a group was also active in Winnipeg.

Around the turn of the century, a relatively small number of Mennonite Brethren began to migrate to Saskatchewan from the United States, especially from Nebraska and Minnesota. These were sometimes referred to as *Amerikaner* (or late *Kanadier*). New congregations were established in places like Dalmeny (1901), Waldheim (1901), and Hepburn (1910). These churches usually retained a distinct identity more closely related to their American counterparts. Their transition to the English language came earlier and with less tension than their Canadian counterparts. They were also more open to the religious and theological currents in the US, such as fundamentalism and evangelicalism.

The largest group of Mennonites, including many Mennonite Brethren, migrated to Canada in the 1920s after the Russian Revolution.

These were often referred to as *Russländer*. In Russia, their experience had been one of increasing prosperity, including the development of strong institutions such as schools, hospitals, and manufacturing enterprises. In Canada, the *Russländer* Mennonite Brethren established large new congregations in places like North Kildonan (Manitoba), Kitchener (Ontario), Coaldale (Alberta), and later Yarrow (British Columbia). In other places, they joined existing Mennonite Brethren congregations, including North End (later Elmwood) and Winkler, and some of the Saskatchewan congregations. They brought with them a strong cultural identity, which included a desire to maintain the use of the German language as the primary vehicle for the transmission of their religious values.[1]

A fourth group of Mennonite Brethren arrived after World War II, not long after MBBC was established. Some of the young people from this group became students at MBBC, but they had relatively little influence as a group on the development of Bible schools or the college. A significant number of these graduates later became leaders in the church and in society.

The immigration of *Russländer* in the second wave from 1923–1929 drastically changed the character of Mennonite Brethren in Canada. Their larger numbers and their perceived somewhat aggressive nature often brought tension between them and the earlier groups. In Saskatchewan, the newcomers were not always welcomed. These tensions also revealed themselves in the early development of MBBC.

The first decade or more after the immigration of the *Russländer* was characterized by a struggle for economic survival. The immigrants brought little with them and most of them settled in rural communities where long hours of hard work left little time for other pursuits. The stock market crash of 1929 and the drought and the depression of the 1930s made life very difficult for all. Despite these challenges, various institutions were established, including hospitals, credit unions, and German schools. But the most significant development during the 1930s was the establishment of many Bible schools.

Educational developments

Mennonites had very little experience in biblical or theological education prior to coming to North America. The Dutch Mennonites established a seminary in Amsterdam as early as 1811. In Russia, the Mennonites

1. See Gerald C. Ediger, *Crossing the Divide: Language Transition Among Canadian Mennonite Brethren, 1940–1970* (Winnipeg, MB: Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies, 2001).

struggled with the issue of biblical and theological education for a long period. They had only limited success prior to the Soviet period.[2] The two major denominational groups—the Mennonite Church (sometimes referred to as *Kirchliche* or General Conference Mennonites) and the Mennonite Brethren—dealt with some of the issues cooperatively while following distinct paths on other issues. There were, of course, various provisions for Bible study and religious education within the general educational systems operated by the Mennonites. Bible conferences were sometimes sponsored by estate owners.[3] Increasingly, Mennonites also looked for opportunities for theological study abroad, especially in Germany and Switzerland.

Several issues inhibited the development of advanced formal theological education in Russia. To some extent, Mennonites were suspicious of higher education in general and of formal theological education in particular. The concept of the priesthood of all believers, which was promoted by Martin Luther during the Reformation, was one that was also generally accepted by the early Anabaptists. In subsequent years, the major Protestant denominations developed theological training institutions and accepted a professional clergy. The Mennonites, however, appointed various categories of ordained ministry, including *Lehrer* (teachers), *Prediger* (preachers), and *Ältester* (bishops or elders). But these positions did not have prescribed formal education and were usually not salaried.

In addition to internal disagreement about formal theological training, there were also legal or state barriers to overcome. The manifesto that Catherine the Great issued in 1763 forbade foreign settlers from establishing monasteries. This was sometimes broadly interpreted as a prohibition against forming ministerial training institutions. The first formal call for a theological training school in Russia came at one of the first sessions of the General Conference of Mennonites (*Allgemeine Konferenz*) in 1883.[4] But for the next 40 years, all attempts failed, and no such school was ever established in Russia.

As early as 1855, some Mennonite Brethren began attending theological schools in Europe, including the Hamburg Baptist Theological

2. See Abe Dueck, "The Quest for a Mennonite Seminary in Russia, 1883–1926: Signs of a Changing Mennonite World," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 74, no. 3 (July 2000): 441–462.

3. See Adolf Ens, "Mennonite Education in Russia," 75–97, and Abe Dueck, "Mennonite Churches and Religious Developments in Russia from 1850–1914," 149–181, in *Mennonites in Russia, 1788–1988: Essays in Honour of Gerhard Lohrenz*, ed. John Friesen (Winnipeg, MB: CMBC Publications, 1989).

4. Dueck, "The Quest for a Mennonite Seminary," 442.

Seminary and the *Allianz* Bible School in Berlin (later in Wiedenest).[5] The desire for a Mennonite Brethren school in Russia was expressed at least as early as 1907. But it was more than a decade later, at the beginning of the Soviet era, that a Bible school was established at Tschongrav in Crimea.[6] Instructors at the school included Abraham H. Unruh, Gerhard J. Reimer, and Johann G. Wiens.

In the meantime, Mennonites in North America established a number of Bible schools and colleges beginning in the 19th century. The first ministerial training school opened at Wadsworth, Ohio, in 1868. Major Mennonite denominational schools that have existed for a century or more and continue to this day include Goshen College (Indiana), Bethel College (Kansas), Eastern Mennonite University (Virginia), Tabor College (Kansas), and others. Some of these or their precursors were essentially Bible schools at the beginning and developed into Christian liberal arts colleges with Bible departments. Over time, some began seminary programs that matured into separate institutions. In Canada, the first Mennonite Bible school was established in Kitchener in 1907 (Ontario Mennonite Bible School). In western Canada, the first Mennonite Bible school was established in Herbert, Saskatchewan, in 1913. Although it was originally established by an inter-Mennonite society, it eventually became a Mennonite Brethren school.

The first Mennonite Brethren college was founded in 1908 in Hillsboro, Kansas, and was known as Tabor College. Until 1934, the school was owned by the Tabor College Corporation. In 1935, ownership was transferred to the General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America. At that time, the conference was organized into four district conferences. Canada constituted the Northern District and, therefore, became part owner of Tabor College.

During the early years, there was some ambiguity about the degree to which Tabor was a Bible school and the degree to which it was a Christian liberal arts school.[7] Although originally one of the main goals of the college was to foster the German language as a vehicle to preserve the faith,[8] in time, it grew and offered a broad range of programs, and the role of German language instruction faded. In 1943–1944, Tabor

5. See Abe Dueck, "The Changing Role of Biblical/Theological Education in the Mennonite Brethren Church," in *The Bible and the Church: Essays in Honour of Dr. David Ewert*, ed. A. J. Dueck, H. J. Giesbrecht, and V. G. Shillington (Winnipeg, MB: Kindred Press, 1988), 131–148.

6. Dueck, "The Quest for a Mennonite Seminary," 457.

7. *Tabor College: A Century of Transformation, 1908–2008* (Hillsboro, KS: Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies, 2008), 20–21.

8. Prior to the founding of Tabor College in 1908, Mennonite Brethren had supported a German department at McPherson College in Kansas.

had three distinct programs: a College of liberal arts and sciences, a Bible school, and an Academy (high school). It offered a Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree, a Bachelor of Theology (BTh) degree, a Bachelor of Religious Education (BRE) degree, and a Graduate in Theology (GTh) degree (a two-year undergraduate degree in Bible and theology within the Bible school).[9] In February 1944, the Tabor College board authorized the introduction of a Bachelor of Divinity (BD) degree program.[10] Beginning in the early 1930s, more and more Canadian Mennonite Brethren studied at Tabor in various programs.[11] Some of these became faculty members at MBBC. Abraham H. Unruh was listed as professor of Bible at Tabor from 1936–1939 and as special lecturer until 1944.[12]

In 1948, the education committee of the General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church recommended that the conference consider giving the Bible school of Tabor College recognition as a seminary. At the suggestion of Unruh, the conference endorsed the need for a seminary in principle. A study commission was appointed to plan for the establishment of a seminary. At the next convention in 1951 in Winkler, the commission presented its findings favouring the establishment of a seminary close to an existing Mennonite Brethren school. It further recommended coordinating the higher institutions of learning into a unified educational system.[13] Further action was referred to the district conferences. These efforts to establish a seminary took place during a time when a professional clergy or salaried pastors were still not generally accepted in Canada.

The year 1954 marked a watershed moment in the history of cooperative educational efforts at the General Conference level and in the relationships and structures of the North American Mennonite Brethren. Canadian Mennonite Brethren were reluctant to continue joint ventures in education, partly because by then MBBC had already been established to prepare congregational ministers and partly because they feared the demise of the tradition of congregations using multiple lay ministers. In the US, the salaried pastoral system had already been

9. *Tabor College Catalog*, 1943–1944, 60–61, Vol. 888, Fld. 14, Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies (CMBS), Winnipeg.

10. *Tabor College Catalog*, 1947–1948, 69, Vol. 888, Fld. 14, CMBS, Winnipeg.

11. In 1930, John B. (J. B.) Toews and Jacob J. (J. J.) Toews began their studies at Tabor College. See John B. Toews, *JB: The Autobiography of a Twentieth-Century Mennonite Pilgrim* (Fresno, CA: Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies, 1995), 66ff.

12. *Tabor College Catalog*, 1943–1944, 13–14, Vol. 888, Fld. 14, CMBS, Winnipeg.

13. *Yearbook: General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America, 45th Convention* (1951), 119.

adopted by most churches.[14] As a result, the Canadians no longer formally continued in the governance and support of Tabor College. In 1955, a seminary was established for the US constituency in Fresno, California. Tabor's contribution to the preparation of leaders for Christian ministry gradually decreased.

As indicated above, the first Bible school in Canada that was essentially a Mennonite Brethren school was the Herbert Bible School, founded in 1913 under the leadership of John F. Harms, a prominent American Mennonite Brethren.[15] The Bible school movement accelerated after the arrival of many refugees from the Soviet Union in the 1920s. According to Bruce Guenther, Mennonite Brethren were by far the most aggressive group in the Bible school movement in that they organized more schools than any other denomination.[16] The first Bible school to be established by these *Russländer* was Winkler Bible School in 1925. It was begun by three former instructors from the Bible school in Tschongrav, Crimea—Abraham H. Unruh, Gerhard J. Reimer, and Johann G. Wiens.[17] It was also strongly supported by Abram A. Kroeker, a *Kanadier*, who initially taught at the school and provided financial backing. By 1944, there were 18 Mennonite Brethren Bible schools in five Canadian provinces.[18]

It is important to note the role that the Bible schools played not only in retaining the religious heritage of Mennonites but simultaneously the cultural identity particularly with respect to the German language. Not surprisingly, the Saskatchewan Bible schools at Herbert and Hepburn made the easiest transition to the English language.[19] As Gerry Ediger has demonstrated, until mid-century, the German language was regarded, especially by the *Russländer*, as the best or essential vehicle for retaining the identity of the Mennonite Brethren community.[20] As the story of MBBC will show, this factor was a prominent concern in the early years of MBBC.

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14. Abe J. Klassen, ed., *The Seminary Story: Twenty Years of Education in Ministry, 1955–1975* (Fresno, CA: Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary, 1975).

15. See Wally Kroeker, "Editor Harms, Restless and Visionary," in *Canadian Mennonite Brethren, 1910–2010: Leaders Who Shaped Us*, ed. Harold Jantz (Winnipeg, MB: Kindred Productions, 2010), 11–21.

16. For a detailed study of the Bible school movement in western Canada, see Bruce Guenther, "Training for Service: The Bible School Movement in Western Canada, 1909–1960" (PhD dissertation, McGill University, 2001); and Bruce Guenther, "From Bible College to University: Expanding the Scope of Mennonite Post-Secondary Education in Canada since 1970," *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 37 (2019): 179–210.

17. Gerhard D. Pries, *A Place Called Peniel: Winkler Bible Institute, 1925–1975* (Winkler, MB: Winkler Bible Institute, 1975).

18. Klassen, ed., *The Seminary Story*.

19. See Bruce Guenther and Abe J. Dueck, "Bethany College," *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online*, 2009.

20. Ediger, *Crossing the Divide*.

1

A Vision Emerges, 1939–1944

The first official reference to the need for a "higher Bible school" in Canada was made in 1939 by J. A. Toews, Sr., at the annual Northern District (Canadian) Mennonite Brethren convention in Coaldale, Alberta. In his report about the development of schools in various regions, Toews stated that it was urgent that Bible teachers receive a special theological and a thorough general education. Many young men and women attended seminaries and colleges but still were not worthy to teach in Bible schools, he stated. Those who were gifted should be given an opportunity to further their education, otherwise young people would soon not attend the Bible schools, he added.[1]

But there were other underlying factors that prompted the desire for a higher Bible school in Canada. As stated previously, Canadian Mennonite Brethren were part of the General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches of North America, the conference that owned and operated Tabor College. The General Conference had a program at Tabor that might have been considered adequate to meet the expressed needs of educating Bible teachers. However, the Canadian Mennonite Brethren constituency had grown distrustful of the Americans in many respects.

First, the Canadians felt underrepresented and often ignored by their American counterparts. They were only one of four district conferences that made up the General Conference, even though their membership far exceeded that of any of the other districts and soon approximated the total membership of the other three.[2] Frustrations were felt in at

1. *Yearbook: Northern District Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America, 30th Convention* (1939), 24–26. With the Act of Incorporation, adopted in 1946, the Northern District was renamed the Canadian Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America.

2. In 1944, the total US membership was 9,047 and the Canadian membership was 8,754 (including Ontario). See *Yearbook: General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America, 43rd Convention* (1945), 68.

least three areas: missions, publication, and education. The relationships between the two constituencies were often tense.

In terms of missions, Canadians felt that the mission board, which consisted almost entirely of Americans, was prejudiced against Canadian candidates. The credentials for Canadian candidates for foreign missions were often not regarded as sufficient without further training at Tabor. The most notable event concerned Henry and Anna (Funk) Bartsch, who had attended Winkler Bible School and felt called to mission service in Africa. The mission board advised them to attend Tabor College to become eligible, but they were determined to proceed to Africa without further training. As a result, a group in Winkler initiated the establishment of the *Afrika Missionsverein* in 1935. This society operated as a separate Canadian mission agency until the mid-1940s. From 1935 to 1943, only one Canadian couple (Abram A. and Annie [Enns] Unruh) was accepted by the Board of Foreign Missions. As late as 1956, the Canadian Board of Reference and Counsel was asked, "Why do missionary candidates still have to go to Hillsboro in spite of adequate training?"[3]

In the area of publications, the first official periodical of the North American Mennonite Brethren was the German-language *Zionsbote* begun in 1885. About 50 years later (1937), *The Christian Leader* was added as the English-language denominational news magazine. The transition to English was, therefore, well underway in the US by 1940. Both periodicals were published in Hillsboro.

Canadian Mennonites were already familiar with another periodical, *Die Mennonitische Rundschau*, which covered news relating to the Russian Mennonites. Originally published in Scottdale, Pennsylvania, it moved to Winnipeg in 1924 and gradually transitioned to become the official German-language periodical of the Canadian Mennonite Brethren conference by 1950. In the meantime, the Canadian conference became increasingly concerned that the youth were not adequately served in the German language and decided to launch the *Jugentblatt* in 1946.[4] Fifteen of 32 pages were in English, and six of these were in a special Saskatchewan section because that province was farther along in the transition to English. In 1955, the Canadian conference began an English-only publication called the *Mennonite Observer* (1955–1961). A further step was taken in 1962, when the Canadian conference began publishing the *Mennonite Brethren Herald*. These various publication efforts

3. For a more detailed discussion, see Abe J. Dueck, "Kanadier, Amerikaner and Russländer: Patterns of Fragmentation among North American Mennonite Brethren Churches," *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 19 (2001): 180–194.

4. Ediger, *Crossing the Divide*, 34.

demonstrate the gradual nationalization of publication efforts and the much slower pace of language transition in Canada as compared to the US. However, the changes also demonstrate the underlying tensions. The US-based publications, Canadians argued, did not adequately understand the Canadian needs.[5] This pertained especially to the continuing desire to perpetuate the German language.

A Canadian higher Bible school, MBBC

The move to establish a Canadian higher Bible school, therefore, came amid other concerns of the Canadian constituency. The convention in 1939 engaged in a lengthy discussion and finally decided to appoint a commission to study the matter and report at the next convention. The commission consisted of 14 representatives, selected from each of the provincial conferences. Later, this evolved into a committee, but, with the outbreak of World War II, little was accomplished for several years. When the committee met for the first time, it stated that its objective was to support all the schools in their respective efforts to teach religion and the German language and to support the churches in their efforts to nurture young people in their religious heritage.[6] Particularly, it appealed for unity in all the educational efforts. Abraham H. Unruh, the first president of MBBC, wrote, "The roots of disunity were thereby already clearly recognized by the committee's statement."[7] The Bible schools obviously feared what this development might mean for them.

At the 1942 Canadian (Northern District) convention in Winkler, the education committee reported positively about the efforts of the various Bible schools to nurture the young people. But it also lamented that one of the problems was the lack of unity among the various schools. "The conference," it stated, "should do its best to promote the unity of the Bible school teachers in the interest of the unity of the conference in the future."[8] The delegates instructed the committee to sponsor an annual teacher's conference and made funds available for this purpose. The delegates also gratefully acknowledged the work of two Mennonite schools—Mennonite Collegiate Institute (Gretna, Manitoba) and Rosthern Junior College (Rosthern, Saskatchewan)—in their role of instructing young people "in the spirit of our people." These schools

5. Ibid.

6. A. H. Unruh, D*ie Entstehung der Höheren Bibelschule und die Stellung der Manitoba Konferenz dazu*, n.d., 3, Vol. 1088, Fld. 226, CMBS, Winnipeg.

7. Ibid.

8. *Yearbook: Northern District Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America, 32nd Convention* (1942), 13.

were not sponsored by Mennonite Brethren. The convention again elected a Bible school committee.

Mennonite Brethren Bible teacher conference, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, 1941. Front row (l-r): Gerhard Sukkau, Heinrich J. Regehr, Cornelius C. Peters, Abraham H. Unruh, Johann Goertz, and Gerhard W. Peters. Back row: Gerhard D. Pries, Heinrich Dueck, Jacob H. Quiring, Gerhard D. Huebert, John A. Toews, Gerhard Thielmann, and Bernhard W. Sawatzky. (MAID CMBS NP106-01-04)

In 1943, the education committee met with Bible school teachers in Herbert for several days prior to the convention in July. Benjamin B. Janz, who chaired the committee, reported on its behalf at the subsequent convention. His report was warmly received. The delegates then ratified a proposal to establish a "higher Bible school," which initially could be housed in an existing Bible school.[9] This decision was forwarded to the individual congregations for their response. The statement emphasized the need for religious teaching and counselling in the Alternative Service camps, in the Bible schools, and in the congregations. A. H. Unruh noted that the impetus for such a school did not simply come from the committee but from the entire conference. In response to this decision, a separate class was begun at the Winkler Bible School in the fall of 1943. Six students were enrolled in this program.

On 29 April 1944, the conference executive met in Winnipeg and decided to recommend the establishment of a separate higher Bible school. Then, in early June 1944, the Manitoba conference discussed

9. *Yearbook: Northern District Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America, 30th Convention, 33rd Convention* (1943), 4–5.

the issue. Although leaders from other provinces were involved in negotiations leading to the establishment of the college, Manitoba was clearly most directly involved. A. H. Unruh, the principal of Winkler Bible School, was the most respected biblical theologian promoting the cause. The delegates unanimously accepted a motion by Cornelius A. DeFehr to recommend to the Northern District conference that it establish a "separate higher Bible school" with Winnipeg as the most suitable location.[10] Care should be taken, he stated, not to act in the interest of any particular Bible school so that the unity of the conference as a whole would be preserved.

One month later, the Northern District conference met in Coaldale. Here the final action was taken to establish the college. Again, Janz spoke on behalf of the committee. The committee presented a five-fold recommendation to the conference:

1) *To establish a school separate from any existing school.*
2) *To establish the school in Winnipeg. The reasons were as follows:*
   a. Winnipeg was centrally located in Canada.
   b. Several large Mennonite Brethren churches already existed in Winnipeg where students could be involved in ministry and outreach.
   c. A suitable building had already been located for the purpose.
3) *To create a short confession of faith for instructors to affirm.*
4) *To appoint someone to lead the institution.*
5) *To offer a program at an existing school for another year if efforts to accomplish the above failed.*[11]

The delegates discussed the proposals at length and many points of view were expressed. Evidently, there was significant opposition or uncertainty and the delegates recessed to consider the matter further before reconvening. When the delegates reconvened, they decided that Winkler should house the school for another year if plans for Winnipeg could not be concluded in time. Furthermore, they decided to ask Winkler Bible School to release A. H. Unruh to head the effort. Ontario, which was not yet officially part of the Canadian conference, was invited to participate in the venture.[12]

A month later, the "Higher Bible School Committee" met in Herbert and completed more detailed plans, including the purchase of a building, appointments and salaries of faculty, language of instruction,

10. *Yearbook: Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of Manitoba* (June 1944), 42.

11. *Yearbook: Northern District Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America, 34th Convention* (1944), 28–29.

12. Ibid., 32–33.

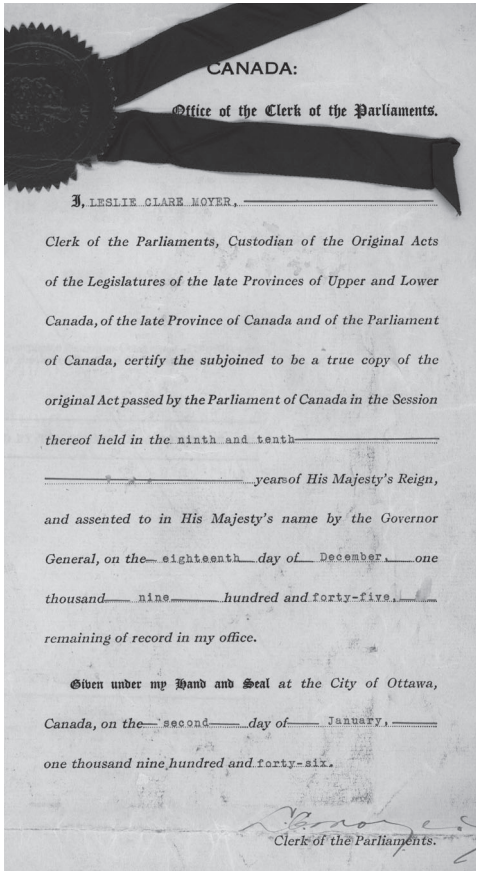
confession of faith, denominational orientation, admission requirements for students, the budget, and the name of the school. The official languages of the school would be German and English. Those offering instruction in English would also be allowed to converse with students in English outside the classroom. Three teachers, two for the English department and one for the German department, were to be appointed in addition to A. H. Unruh as president. Ben Horch was to be approached to take responsibility for music. Student entrance requirements included a recommendation from the applicant's local church and a minimum age of 18 for high school graduates and 21 for those who had not completed high school. Students from non-Mennonite Brethren denominations were welcome and did not have to subscribe to the distinctive teachings of the Mennonite Brethren Church. Two degrees would be offered: a BTh (Bachelor of Theology) and a GTh (Graduate in Theology) degree. The official name of the college was to be *Bibel College der Mennoniten-Brüdergemeinde in Kanada* (Bible College of the Mennonite Brethren Church of Canada).[13]

Mennonite Brethren Bible College, located at the corner of Kelvin Street (later Henderson Highway) and Talbot Avenue, Winnipeg. The brick school building, purchased in 1944 by the Mennonite Brethren conference, was built in 1919 and known as the Anna Gibson School. It had six classrooms and measured 134 feet long and 69 feet wide. While the building has since been removed, a commemorative marker remains on the site. (MAID CMBS NP026-01-81)

In the meantime, Canadian Mennonite Brethren were still operating as the Northern District of the General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America. It had now developed to the point where it needed to establish itself as an officially registered entity within Canada. One option that was briefly considered was to operate under

13. Ibid., 86–90.

the auspices of the Africa Missions Society (*Afrika Missionsverein*). However, it was soon decided that it needed to apply for a separate charter. In December 1945, the Canadian parliament passed a private member's bill as a special act of parliament, incorporating the Canadian Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America as a charity. One of the provisions of the charter stated that it was allowed "to erect, maintain and conduct therein churches, schools, colleges, orphanages, hospitals and homes for the aged."[14] During the first year of the college's operation, therefore, it did not have a legal status.



CANADA:

Office of the Clerk of the Parliaments.

I, LESLIE CLARE MOYER,

Clerk of the Parliaments, Custodian of the Original Acts of the Legislatures of the late Provinces of Upper and Lower Canada, of the late Province of Canada and of the Parliament of Canada, certify the subjoined to be a true copy of the original Act passed by the Parliament of Canada in the Session thereof held in the ninth and tenth years of His Majesty's Reign, and assented to in His Majesty's name by the Governor General, on the eighteenth day of December, one thousand nine hundred and forty-five, remaining of record in my office.

Given under my Hand and Seal at the City of Ottawa, Canada, on the second day of January, one thousand nine hundred and forty-six.

Clerk of the Parliaments.

Incorporation charter of the Canadian Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America, 1945 (Vol. 39, Fld. 1, CMBS, Winnipeg)

In the following year, the conference accepted a constitution and by-laws. Article XIV of the by-laws was on education. It stated as follows:

> *The conference recognizes its sacred duty to support and further the general Christian training that is being given in families, churches, public schools, and Bible schools. In a more direct sense, the conference finds its duty in providing the opportunity for its youth to prepare themselves for specific vocations under a positive Christian influence and in the spirit of their forebears. . . . This includes the maintenance of an institution of higher learning and may lead to the establishment and support of other schools. First consideration is given to the Mennonite Brethren Bible College as the school of the conference, and the following provisions apply primarily to the maintenance and management of that school.*[15]

14. *Charter and By-Laws of the Canadian Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America* (Winnipeg, MB: The Christian Press, [1946?]), 4.

15. Ibid., 52.

A lengthy section then dealt with the election and duties of the education committee. These by-laws governed the operation of the college until a revised constitution and by-laws were adopted in 1970.

2

The Founding President: Abraham H. Unruh, 1944–1945

Abraham H. Unruh (1878–1961) soon became the individual whose name was most closely attached to the identity of MBBC. He was already in the prime of his life when he arrived in Canada from the war-torn Soviet Union in 1925. He had served for several years at an elementary school, a trade school (*Kommerzschule*), and a high school (*Zentralschule*). In the meantime, he was drawn into the preaching ministry. His gifts as a teacher and Bible expositor led to the invitation to join the faculty at the Tschongrow Bible School (1918–1924).[1] In 1925, the Unruhs fled to Canada and Unruh soon began teaching Bible classes in Winkler together with his former colleagues. These were the beginnings of the Winkler Bible School.[2]

Unruh had no formal, advanced theological education; although, in 1938, he received an honorary Doctor of Divinity (DD) degree from Bethel College in Kansas. His favourite German theologian was Adolf Schlatter. He read widely and was much appreciated for his expository Bible teaching and preaching, which was always laced with good humour. J. B. Toews described him as follows: "Unruh was a man of broad scholarship, deep piety and sincerity, embodied in a cheerful and engaging personality. His classes were never dull. He made the Bible come alive through stories and experiences from real life situations. In hours of relaxation, he would be the entertainer of the gathering."[3]

Although the formal steps to establish a separate school were in place by the summer of 1944, it had become clear that not everybody

1. Margaret Reimer, *The Story of the Crimea Bible School Theological Seminary, 1918–1924*, trans. Edwin Reimer (Self-published, [1975?]).

2. For a brief biography, see Dan Unrau, "Abraham H. Unruh: Prince of Preachers, Servant of the Word," in *Canadian Mennonite Brethren, 1910–2010: Leaders Who Shaped Us*, ed. Harold Jantz (Winnipeg, MB: Kindred Productions, 2010), 71–81.

3. Toews, *JB*, 134.

Abraham H. Unruh (MAID CMBS NP026-02-39)

agreed. Indeed, opposition to the proposal was such that one individual, Cornelius J. Funk from Winkler, took the initiative to publish three open letters (*Elihubriefe*), detailing his concerns.[4] The first one (September 1944) was initially published anonymously. The final edition included all three letters and included the name of the author. On 30 September, Unruh wrote a strong letter accusing Funk of spreading falsehood and making misleading statements. Unruh even accused him of breaking the law by using the postal system to disseminate falsehood. At the Manitoba provincial conference in October 1944, Funk was admonished for the manner and substance of his letters. The education committee also raised the issue at its April 1945 meeting and indicated that the Winkler church and the Manitoba conference would deal with the issue. In the meantime, the education committee proceeded to promote the new MBBC initiative and to organize the details of the program, faculty, finances, and housing.

When classes began in fall, there were only 11 day students enrolled in the college program. In addition, there were seven evening students enrolled in the regular program and 40 enrolled in the Sunday school course. Some arrived late because of commitments related to the Alternative Service program or because of other obligations. In the meantime, B. B. Janz negotiated with government officials to release young men from their service assignments as soon as possible. Five young men from the Coaldale area arrived at the college late. Janz was

4. Cornelius J. Funk, *Auf Dem Wege zum College der Mennoniten Brüder Gemeinden von Kanada: Beobachtungen, Wünsche, Hoffnungen, Einsicht, Realismus* (Self-published, 1945). See also David Ewert, "Abraham H. Unruh (1878–1961)," in *Honour Such People* (Winnipeg, MB: Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies, 1997), 1–17. Funk accused the conference leadership (including Unruh) of manipulating the conference into accepting their proposal and not following a "brotherhood" process.

also in contact with Elder David Janzen of the Conference of Mennonites who was negotiating on behalf of three young men. The opening program was postponed to 7 October. High school courses showed a more positive response with an enrolment of 45 students.[5] According to Unruh's report in December, there were two full-time faculty and several part-time faculty members.[6] Abraham J. Voth, the only other full-time faculty member, was appointed as Dean. Voth had studied in Rochester, New York, and earned a BD degree in Chicago. He only taught at MBBC for one year and, as such, was one of the founding faculty members.

The first MBBC class (1944–1945) of students and faculty, standing in front of the college building. Front row (l-r): Heinrich P. Toews (college committee chair), Abraham H. Unruh, and Abraham J. Voth. (MAID CMBS NP026-04-06)

The full committee met on 19 December 1944. After reviewing the present status, it spent considerable time planning the future. An important issue was the need for high school education for students. Of the 11 day students enrolled, two had completed Grade 11 and one had completed Normal School in preparation for teaching in the public schools. Eight had completed one or more years of Bible school, presumably without a high school education. Committee members, therefore, expressed a strong desire to offer high school education at the

5. Enrollment numbers were not consistent in the various reports during the first year.

6. College Committee Minutes, 19 December 1944, Vol. 57, Fld. 1, CMBS, Winnipeg. It is not clear whether Unruh was included in this number. Faculty appointments were not all clearly defined during the first year. Note: During the initial years, the committee was variously referred to as the School Committee, the College Committee, or the Bible College Committee. In time, it was increasingly referred to as the Mennonite Brethren Bible College Committee. In 1966, a new organizational structure was accepted and MBBC was governed by the Board of Higher Education.

grade 11 and 12 levels. However, Janz stated that both British Columbia and Alberta were planning to establish their own high schools, and, therefore, such a school would only benefit Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Unruh responded that offering high school courses could become the basis of a senior college.[7] The committee decided to proceed with plans and to appoint Unruh as principal for an indefinite period.

Unruh always regarded his leadership of MBBC as a temporary arrangement, one that would allow the school to become established quickly until a more suitable individual could be found. He was also very aware that the school needed to be led by someone who was thoroughly bilingual, someone who was younger, and someone who could understand the North American culture and the challenges that lay ahead for Mennonite Brethren youth.

In his June report at the end of the first year, Unruh reviewed the progress of the college and stated that the education committee had agreed at its sessions in Coaldale that the program should be closely tied to Tabor College. Eventually, he stated, the conference might be able to offer a complete seminary program.[8]

At the June convention in Yarrow, delegates engaged in a vigorous debate concerning the actions that the committee had taken thus far. In the end, the delegates expressed overwhelming confidence in the committee's actions and approved a series of recommendations relating to the expansion and development of the college.[9] The delegates approved the committee's recommendation not to proceed with the development of a high school program for the present but to offer a few evening courses as necessary. Henry H. Janzen, speaking on behalf of the Ontario conference, indicated a strong commitment to support the college.

7. It is not clear what Unruh meant by this.

8. "Der Bericht über die Arbeit im Bibel College im Schuljahr 1944–1945," College Committee Minutes and Reports, 1944–1950, Vol. 57, Fld. 1, CMBS, Winnipeg.

9. *Yearbook: Northern District Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America, 35th Convention* (1945), 65–74.

3

Consolidation and Expansion: J. B. Toews, 1945–1948

In December 1944, the college committee decided to appoint Unruh as principal of MBBC for an indefinite period.[1] Later that year, Unruh was asked to approach J. B. Toews and invite him to accept a teaching position at the college. Toews agreed to come to Winnipeg in April to meet with the committee. By then, however, Unruh had indicated his desire to resign his position, particularly because of his advanced age, his lack of adequate training, his lack of proficiency in English, and the need for someone else to administer the high school program.[2] He recommended that Toews be appointed as the new president. Toews stated his general agreement with the vision for the college, citing only a few minor reservations. The committee decided to recommend the appointment of Toews as the new president.[3] The appointment was ratified by the Canadian convention in Yarrow in June.[4]

When J. B. Toews (1906–1998) arrived in Winnipeg in the summer of 1945, he already had a rich and diverse background. He was a *Russländer*, but, in contrast to Unruh, his main educational and ministry background was in North America. He may have been the first of the recent immigrants to enroll at Tabor College (1931). Later, he received a BD degree and a ThM degree from Western Baptist Theological Seminary in Portland, Oregon. Interspersed were years of pastoral ministry and teaching/administration at Bethany Bible School in Hepburn, Saskatchewan.[5]

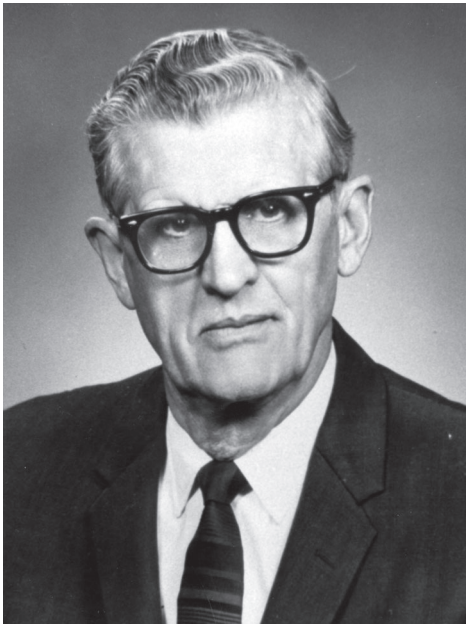
1. College Committee Minutes, 19 December 1944, Vol. 57, Fld. 1, CMBS, Winnipeg.

2. Executive report by C. C. Warkentin, undated (April? 1945), Vol. 57, Fld. 1, CMBS, Winnipeg; see also College Committee Minutes, 25 April 1945, B. B. Janz Papers, Vol. 983, Fld. 76a, CMBS, Winnipeg.

3. The terms "principal" and "president" were used interchangeably in the initial period.

4. *Yearbook: Northern District Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America, 35th Convention* (1945), 71.

5. See Toews, *JB*; and Abraham Friesen, "John B. Toews: The Last of the Russian MBs," in



J. B. (John B.) Toews (MAID CMBS NP026-02-37)

J. B. Toews began his term as president in late July 1945. His own assessment of the challenge that lay ahead is clearly revealed in a letter to his uncle, B. B. Janz. The letter stated as follows:

> *In the course of the year, it has become very clear how far we (or perhaps particularly, the youth of our congregations) are from unity in theology, spiritual values, and respect and love for our fellowship. The local Bible schools have totally disregarded instruction in these matters. The loyalty of our young people to the churches is absent. Their concept of the church is exclusively local. In many instances, their experience with the local churches has not been positive. They are not informed about the larger brotherhood; they are overwhelmed by anything beyond their local experience. The result is that we as Mennonite Brethren churches have no ability to respond and no clear objectives to accomplish.*
>
> *Our brotherhood is only concerned about self-preservation, and we seek to accomplish this by means of isolation. Other denominations are able to show real commitments—we have none. This is the path of our youth. Where have we failed in our efforts, how can we improve, how can we achieve the unity of our brotherhood? The college will not achieve this by itself; however, without a central school that expresses our entire spirituality, one that has a concept of the larger perspective of our people and our churches, it will not happen. This realization has contributed much to my inner willingness this past year to offer all, even my health, in order to promote this work. Will our people, our churches, grasp this vision and be prepared to take ownership and promote the sacrifice and labour that will be required to build and accomplish this task?*[6]

Toews's statement was truly remarkable and one that he probably would not have shared more openly. Such criticism of the local churches and the Bible schools could have galvanized opposition to the college, which

Canadian Mennonite Brethren, 1910–2010: Leaders Who Shaped Us, ed. Harold Jantz (Winnipeg, MB: Kindred Productions, 2010), 171–188.

6. Undated letter (June? 1945), B. B. Janz Papers, Vol. 983, Fld. 76a, CMBS, Winnipeg.

was already looked at with some suspicion and as competing with some local educational initiatives.

Toews spent considerable time in summer preparing the college catalogue. A second year was added to the program. Additional faculty members were appointed—Reuben M. Baerg and Jacob H. Quiring. They were both from Saskatchewan with family roots in the US. They, therefore, did not fit the dominant *Russländer* culture of MBBC, although Quiring had studied at Winkler and had taught at the Coaldale Bible School. They were both fluent in English, in contrast to most of the other early faculty members. Baerg only remained for two years, and, after additional studies in the US, he taught in Fresno at the Pacific Bible Institute and Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary. Ben Horch, who had directed a choir during the first year, was appointed on a part-time basis to head the music department. At the convention in Yarrow in July, Heinrich P. Toews, the chair of the committee, stated concerning Horch, "Anyone who appeals to the young people will determine the future, and anyone who promotes singing and music will attract the young people."[7]

The objective of the school as articulated in the 1945–1946 catalogue was as follows:

> *The Mennonite Brethren Bible College seeks to provide an opportunity for earnest young men and women to prepare adequately for the high calling of Christian service as ministers, teachers, missionaries, and workers in other fields of Christian work. The institution, even though a school of the Mennonite Brethren conference, recognizes the unity of all true believers and, therefore, offers its service and opportunities to men and women of all other evangelical denominations in our Canadian land and the northern areas of the USA.*[8]

In early November, J. B. Toews wrote a detailed report for the Ontario conference. He reported that enrolment in the college program had increased considerably by then, with 69 students enrolled in the day classes and 21 in the evening classes. Later that academic year (April 1946), the high school (Mennonite Brethren Collegiate Institute) was organized as a separate institution, although close ties between the college and the collegiate remained.

The committee met from 12–15 December 1945 with a lengthy agenda, including a review of entrance requirements, status of the high school program, and appointment of faculty. The nature and purpose of the music program was also highlighted, and a statement of its aims was

7. *Yearbook: Northern District Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America, 35th Convention* (1945), 62–63.

8. *MBBC Catalogue*, 1945–1946, 7, Vol. 117, Fld. 1, CMBS, Winnipeg.

received. Although it focused on the preparation of choir leaders and music teachers, it also included statements that pointed toward a broader perspective in music appreciation. The very first aim was to develop "music teachers of proven Christian character for our rural Mennonite communities who can instruct private lessons in piano, voice or violin."[9] The music program was immediately quite popular, largely due to the vision and energetic work of Ben and Esther (Hiebert) Horch. In his autobiography, Toews stated, "I found myself troubled by the immediate popularity of musical interest. Ben and Esther were so successful that I feared music might detract from the biblical and theological core."[10]

MBBC faculty, 1945–1946. Front row (l-r): Heinrich Wall, Abraham H. Unruh, and J. B. Toews. Back row: Reuben Baerg, Jacob H. Quiring, and Ben Horch. (MAID CMBS NP026-02-62)

Toews's fears about the music program prophetically anticipated the many concerns repeated throughout much of the later history of the college. For three years, from 1946 to 1948, Handel's oratorio, *Messiah*, was performed annually under the baton of Horch. The first performance took place at King Memorial United Church in Elmwood. In subsequent years, it was performed in various Winnipeg churches. Later, other works, such as John Farmer's *Christ and his Soldiers* and John Stainer's *The Crucifixion* were performed. In particular, *Messiah* became a very popular work, not only in Winnipeg but also in many other locations. In 1955, it was performed by a Coaldale Mennonite Brethren choir in Southminster United Church in Lethbridge, Alberta. It was conducted by Peter Dick, who had studied under Horch at MBBC.

9. College Committee Minutes, 12–15 December 1945, Vol. 57, Fld. 1, CMBS, Winnipeg.
10. Toews, *JB*, 135.

When the college committee met in April 1946, Toews gave a summary review of the status of the college. He lamented the disparity of educational background of the students. He also cited other factors that created major challenges, such as language competence in English or German and the varying religious perspectives of students.[11]

The 1946–1947 catalogue revealed a further expansion of programs. A Bachelor of Religious Education (BRE) degree was added. Separate missionary and music courses were created. By 1948, the curriculum was divided into 12 different departments and a Diploma of Sacred Music was offered.

College Committee, 1945. Front row (l-r): Heinrich P. Toews, J. B. Toews, and Bernhard B. Fast. Middle row: John M. Neufeld, Cornelius F. Klassen, Abraham H. Unruh, and Johann P. Braun. Back row: David B. Wiens, Benjamin B. Janz, Cornelius C. Peters, and Cornelius A. DeFehr. (MAID CMBS NP026-04-11)

In 1946, the college committee endorsed the proposal to enter into an agreement with the University of Manitoba to offer courses using prescribed textbooks and then writing the university exams to receive credit. The committee also endorsed a proposal to begin a medical department to train nurses and doctors for missionary work. The first two registered nurses, who were appointed to instruct in practical nursing, were Mrs. Anne (Peters) Toews and Frieda Unruh. Dr. Nicholas J. Neufeld and Dr. Henry Guenther were also appointed to give lectures related to obstetrics, minor surgery, physiology, and anatomy.[12] The fourth annual catalogue (1947–1948) was the first to list a separate Medical Missionary Department, including eight different courses or

11. College Committee Minutes, 11 April 1946, Vol. 57, Fld. 1, CMBS, Winnipeg.
12. Executive Minutes, 1 October 1946, Vol. 57, Fld. 1, CMBS, Winnipeg.

lecture subjects, such as dentistry and tropical medicine.[13] In time, these courses were discontinued.

The language issue was a major problem from the very beginning of the college. The second annual catalogue was prepared by Toews in English but was translated and distributed in German. The next one (1946–1947), however, was in English. Toews reported that it was very difficult to implement the policy of having 18 of 48 hours of weekly instruction in the German language because the general language of discourse for students was English. The committee felt strongly about retaining the policy so that, when students returned to their churches, they could minister in both languages. But it felt that the local churches needed to do more to preserve the German language. In keeping with this concern, the committee recommended against accepting so-called "English" students, fearing that relationships with undesirable consequences might be established.[14]

In June 1947, the college reported that only 25% of the students understood German reasonably well and that these preferred instruction in English. And 25% had no competence in German. The board instructed two of its members to devise a plan to deal with the language issue.[15]

Presumably, intermarriage with non-Mennonites was at the heart of this concern. Mennonite Brethren still felt a strong sense that their future depended heavily on retaining a separate identity. This was despite the fact that much of their religious identity had been shaped by German Baptist and pietist groups in Russia. However, these Baptists had a different historical background than most of the Baptists in North America.

At the committee meeting in April 1946, Henry H. Janzen was appointed as a full-time faculty member for 1946–1947, on condition that he relinquish his assignments pertaining to the *Mennonitische Rundschau*. A year later, Janzen would become the president. When the college committee met in June 1946, Toews asked the committee to review whether he was the right person to lead the college. The committee affirmed his reappointment for an indefinite term, and this was formally approved by the convention in Winkler in succeeding days.[16]

The reports and deliberations at the convention underlined

13. *MBBC Catalogue*, 1947–1948, 35–36, Vol. 117, Fld. 1, CMBS, Winnipeg.

14. College Committee Minutes, 11 April 1946, Vol. 57, Fld. 1, CMBS, Winnipeg.

15. See Ediger, *Crossing the Divide*, for a detailed analysis of the language transition in the Canadian Conference.

16. *Yearbook: Canadian Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America, 36th Convention* (1946), 112.

some of the contentious issues that the college faced. Concern was expressed by the delegates that not enough was being done to promote the German language. Was the German language a requirement for students? The British Columbia delegates requested that it be obligatory. Toews responded that every student who wished to graduate had to be competent in both languages and that certain courses were only offered in German. Once again, he placed the onus on local congregations to ensure that students would be competent in German when they arrived at the college.

Another issue of concern was the denominational and educational background of students. Sixty-one out of a total of 75 students were members of the Mennonite Brethren Church. Fifty-eight students had some Bible school training in 16 different schools. Only five of these schools were Mennonite Brethren. Toews remarked, "Our schools must not be distinguished by an interdenominational character. Rather, our position and character as a brotherhood must be evident in the education of our future leaders."[17] Furthermore, many students had a very weak academic background. About two-thirds of the students were male, and about one-third were married. The average age was about 27.[18]

MBBC faculty and committee members at the sod-turning ceremony for the construction of the Eben-Ezer dormitory and dining hall, 1946. C. A. DeFehr turns the sod. Looking on are (l-r) H. P. Toews, J. B. Toews, and A. H. Unruh. (MAID CMBS NP026-02-96)

17. Ibid., 104
18. Ibid., 101.

By the time of the July convention, 99 students had indicated their intent to enroll in the college in the fall of 1946 (75 for the day program and 24 for evening classes). The actual enrolment reported by Toews in January 1947 was 129 for the day program.[19] This put a severe strain on the physical facilities. The conference endorsed the committee's decision to build a student residence with a dining facility.

Eben-Ezer Hall completed in 1946. Four decades later, in 1985, it was renovated and renamed the C. A. DeFehr Residence. It is no longer standing. (MAID CMBS NP026-01-90)

Building materials were in short supply immediately after the war and C. A. DeFehr, who was in charge of the project, spent tremendous efforts to obtain the necessary supplies.[20] He was a towering figure who ensured that the necessary physical facilities and the financial resources were available. But the building was not completed for occupancy by October 1946, and the committee had to make special arrangements that created serious difficulties. Married students were asked not to bring their spouses. Some had to be placed in accommodations without kitchen facilities. As a result, they had to be fed in existing dining facilities.[21] By January 1947, however, the building was basically complete and could be occupied.[22] The completed building was named Eben-Ezer Hall and featured kitchen and dining facilities in the basement and housing for single women and married students on the two additional floors. While very primitive by later standards, it served the college for many years. Dining facilities remained there until a new dining hall was completed in 1984.

19. College Committee Minutes, 20–22 January 1947, Vol. 57, Fld. 1, CMBS, Winnipeg.
20. See C. A. DeFehr, *Memories of My Life* (Altona, MB: D. W. Friesen & Sons, Ltd., 1967).
21. College Committee Minutes, 1 October 1946, Vol. 57, Fld. 1, CMBS, Winnipeg.
22. H. P. Toews report, 10 December 1946, Vol. 57, Fld. 1, CMBS, Winnipeg.

The faculty for the 1946–1947 year included Bible/Theology: A. H. Unruh, J. B. Toews, J. H. Quiring, R. M. Baerg, and H. H. Janzen; Music: Ben Horch, Esther Horch, and a variety of part-time appointments in piano, voice, and violin; Languages: Heinrich Wall (German), George Dugard (French), and Liese Schulz (English); and Medicine (part-time): Dr. N. Neufeld, Dr. H. Guenther, and several others.[23]

The actual enrolment in the 1946–1947 year once again exceeded expectations. The January report indicated a total enrolment of 129 day students, 82 of whom were male and 47 were female. Approximately one-half were married. There were 46 students were from Manitoba, 26 from each of British Columbia and Saskatchewan, 19 from Alberta, and 13 from Ontario. Mennonite Brethren numbered 105 and 7 were from the General Conference Mennonite Church, with the remainder from various Mennonite and evangelical denominations. Thirty had completed high school and 17 had completed both high school and Bible school. Twenty had a Bible school education but had not completed high school. This meant that by far the majority had not completed high school.[24]

Toews repeated his concern about the college's relationship to the Bible schools, which were the main feeders of students to the college. The differences between the various Bible school programs and the different levels of academic background of their instructors made it impossible to create a general grid for the transfer of academic credit. This strained the relationships with the Bible schools.[25]

Toews concluded his report with several notable observations. First, he indicated that, as far as he knew, the college was the only "positive evangelical school offering college and seminary level training in Canada."[26] Had the Lord given the school only to the Mennonite Brethren denomination or should it serve a much wider constituency? This, Toews believed, was an important issue relating to the "crystallization" of the college's objectives. The response of the committee was that the college should adhere to the conference's 1945 decision that the main objective was to serve the Mennonite Brethren constituency. However, students from other denominations should be accepted as long as they did not jeopardize this priority.

Toews also remarked that during the years before the college was established, youth tended to seek various opportunities to escape the rigid confines of their communities, attend other schools, enjoy new

23. College Committee Minutes, 20–22 January 1947, Vol. 57, Fld. 1, CMBS, Winnipeg.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid.

experiences, and interact with other points of view. To some extent, the college was now providing such an opportunity and had attracted students who might otherwise have gone elsewhere. Did the college have a responsibility to provide such an opportunity for young people to expand their horizons, he wondered.

In this regard, the committee acknowledged the problem of refusing admission to students who met the main entrance requirements but did not have a clear goal. Probably, these students would not be willing to attend any Mennonite Brethren Bible school. They would attend English schools instead and be lost to the Mennonite Brethren Church, becoming acculturated to the surrounding society.[27]

In June 1947, a change in one of the entrance requirements was deliberated. One of the requirements was that students had to be at least 20 years old. As a result, many prospective students were turned away and went directly to a university. Strong requests had come, particularly from British Columbia, to drop this requirement. The committee agreed to drop this requirement and allow faculty to use their discretion in admitting younger students.[28]

Promotion of the young college and explaining its purpose was an important task. Much of this task lay with the regular faculty, often in connection with preaching assignments throughout the constituency. But the board also used other means, including assigning Abram A. Kroeker to visit most of the Canadian churches in 1947. In Harold Jantz's assessment, "Even where [Kroeker] sensed a certain coolness to the college, he felt it was either because of 'misinformation' or needed persuasion through the 'positive work' of the college faculty."[29]

Several months earlier, in January 1947, the education committee dealt with inquiries from the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren Church (EMB) and the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren Church about the possibility of supporting the college. Although it is not clear just what kind of support was intended, the college committee responded that their students would be welcome to attend, their financial contributions would gladly be received, and representatives of those denominations would be welcome to attend conference deliberations pertaining to the college. The Ontario Mennonite Brethren conference, many of whose members had belonged to the EMB (*Allianz*) church in the Molotschna

27. Ibid.

28. College Committee Minutes, 20–21 June 1947, Vol. 57, Fld. 1, CMBS, Winnipeg.

29. Harold Jantz, "Abram A. Kroeker: Mr. Sunday School or Mr. Potato King or ..." in *Canadian Mennonite Brethren, 1910–2010: Leaders Who Shaped Us*, ed. Harold Jantz (Winnipeg, MB: Kindred Productions, 2010), 94.

Colony in Ukraine, joined the Canadian Mennonite Brethren conference in 1946 and were, therefore, already part of the supporting constituency.[30] The story of the EMB churches in other provinces was more complex, however. In Alberta, there was a separate EMB conference that, for some time, was a member of the *Bruderthaler* (eventually also called EMBs). When the Linden church was accepted as a member of the Mennonite Brethren conference in 1947, the EMBs of *Allianz* background became fully integrated into the conference and the matter of their support was no longer an issue.[31] The Krimmer Mennonite Brethren Church (KMB) originated in Russia in 1869 and most migrated to the US in the 1870s. Only two churches were eventually established in Canada (Waldheim and Langham). Most of the KMB churches merged with the Mennonite Brethren conference in 1960, although the Waldheim (Salem) church joined the EMB conference.

At the same session in 1947, the committee discussed the advisability of beginning a ministers' course. Many churches, including several Winnipeg churches, sponsored annual Bible study conferences where leading ministers lectured on various biblical passages. A ministers' course, however, was intended specifically to serve ordained and lay ministers. Many larger congregations had multiple lay ministers. After some consideration, the committee decided to begin a one-month course in 1948. This was clearly in keeping with the primary mandate of the college.

The first course attracted 30 men from across Canada. The courses became an annual event, usually in February or March, and often attracted large numbers. Occasionally, a mission conference preceded or followed the event. For two years (1973, 1974), it was sponsored cooperatively with Canadian Mennonite Bible College (CMBC) and the name was changed to "Institute for Ministers and Laymen" or "Institute for Church Ministries," reflecting a broadening focus and a gradual change in the nature of ministry in the churches. In 1983, the college sought to enhance its declining status as a focal point for leadership training by seeking co-sponsorship with the Board of Spiritual and Social Concerns (later Board of Faith and Life).

The committee met again in June 1948, prior to the Canadian conference convention in July. The German language issue again emerged

30. This *Allianz* (EMB) church also admitted into membership believers who were baptized by modes other than immersion. Eventually, most of these churches formally joined the Mennonite Brethren conference.

31. See Abe J. Dueck, "The 'Russländer' Evangelical Mennonite Brethren (*Allianz*) in Canada," *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 15 (1997): 45–55.

as a major concern. Toews reported that 25% of the students had no competence in German and 25% were weak.[32]

Although initially the college was given a German name, the name, "Mennonite Brethren Bible College," appears to have been gradually accepted without a formal decision. When the Canadian conference was formally incorporated in 1945, it was given the right to own and operate colleges without specifying the college by name. The 1947–1948 catalogue was the first one to use the name "Mennonite Brethren Bible College," but this did not require any formal legal action because the college was not separately incorporated.

The college at this point was ready to pursue the issue of accreditation more seriously.[33] The committee endorsed the recommendation that the college become a member of the American Association of Bible Colleges (AABC) based in the USA. Toews stated that Canada's theological institutions were based on secular concepts of the "philosophy of religion" and, therefore, could not become the basis for accreditation.[34] Toews also recommended that several instructors be supported to pursue further studies to enable the college to receive two years of accreditation toward a university program. In particular, the college would then be able to offer accredited courses in philosophy, psychology, history, and languages. An accredited Bachelor of Theology program would require the equivalent of two years of university and three years of theology. In February 1948, Toews again underlined the need to seek university accreditation for courses in history, philosophy, psychology, and languages.[35] Consultations between the three colleges in 1946 (Tabor College, Pacific Bible Institute, and MBBC) also resulted in significant attempts to coordinate programs to facilitate student transfers between these schools.[36]

Moral and ethical questions regarding student deportment and school practices that might be considered worldly were a constant concern of the committee and administration. The nature of the graduation ceremony was already addressed in advance of the first graduation in 1947. In view of the practices at other schools, care should be taken not to offend anyone, board members advised. The graduation ceremony should be a

32. College Committee Minutes, 20–21 June 1947, Vol. 57, Fld. 1, CMBS, Winnipeg.

33. Ibid.

34. College Committee Minutes, 19–20 February 1948, Vol. 57, Fld. 1, CMBS, Winnipeg.

35. J. B. Toews's report to the Committee, 19–20 February 1948, Vol. 57, Fld. 1, CMBS, Winnipeg.

36. *Yearbook: Canadian Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America, 37th Convention* (1947), 84.

loving, but simple, celebration.[37] Correspondence between B. B. Janz and Toews reveals how vulnerable the college was and the deep suspicion that many in the constituency had when reports circulated about student life and deportment. Concerns included the role of women, the sports and leisure activities that students engaged in, and various other issues. Janz wrote about a college student who reported to an Alberta congregation that students played baseball and chess at an evangelistic activity, and then drank coffee and tea before sharing the gospel. "Not a harmless ball game, but chess?" Janz mused. He advised Toews to test everything and to avoid all evil as well as the appearance of evil.[38]

In June 1947, the college held its first commencement exercises with the graduation of seven students. The only woman graduate, Mary Toews (sister of the later president, John A. Toews), received a BRE degree. One of the men completed the missionary course, two men received BTh degrees, and three received GTh degrees. The last member of the first graduating class passed away in 2018 at the age of 100 (Alfred Kroeker).[39] At least three graduates later served as missionaries abroad (Abram Esau, Mary Toews, and Henry Poetker), another spent several years in Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) work in Europe, and the others all served as teachers, evangelists, and pastors in Mennonite Brethren institutions and churches. For the first time, an international student from the Netherlands enrolled in the college in 1947. In February 1948, the committee encouraged the administration to admit students from other countries in Europe and South America.

John A. Toews joined the faculty in 1947. In addition to his teaching assignment, he was also appointed as the college's librarian. The enrolment in 1947–1948 showed a less dramatic increase to 131 students with 104 Mennonite Brethren. A significant number (13) were listed as coming from the General Conference Church.[40] David Schroeder, long-time New Testament professor at CMBC, was one of the students and graduated a year later. Henry Poettcker, who later became professor and a long-time president of CMBC, attended MBBC during the college's second year (1945–1946).

In 1947, a second Mennonite college, the Canadian Mennonite Bible College (CMBC), was established in Winnipeg. The records indicate that some attempts were made in 1945 by General Conference of Mennonites

37. College Committee Minutes, 20–22 January 1947, Vol. 57, Fld. 1, CMBS, Winnipeg.

38. Janz letter to J. B. Toews, 12 November 1946, B. B. Janz Papers, Vol. 983, Fld. 76a, CMBS, Winnipeg.

39. Alfred Kroeker passed away on 7 February 2018.

40. Report to the College Committee, Minutes, 19–20 February 1948, Vol. 57, Fld. 1, CMBS, Winnipeg.

in Canada (later Conference of Mennonites in Canada) leaders to develop a joint college, but this was declined by Mennonite Brethren leaders.[41] Toews stated that he found it distasteful that the members of the board had a desire to be sharply separate from other Mennonite groups. "There was no interest," he stated, "in entering into discussion with the General Conference Mennonites who were also moving to establish a college."[42] In later years, the relationship between the two Bible colleges was frequently discussed and various joint efforts were successfully developed, but there were lingering doubts and hesitations about whether full cooperation could be achieved. Some MBs considered the GCs not to be evangelical enough, and some GCs considered MBs to be too pious. Faculty appeared to be more open to cooperation than the constituency. Both groups were handicapped by memories of a painful separation less than a century earlier, by occasional ongoing clashes, and by differences in practices such as the mode of baptism. But most shared the traumatic experiences of the Russian Revolution, the subsequent civil war, and the challenges faced by all refugees trying to establish a new life in a foreign culture.

The committee met in February 1948 to deal with important issues. A lengthy introductory statement by the chair, H. P. Toews, focused on the theme of stabilization, particularly as it related to the mission of the school, the accreditation of the school, and the financial stability of the school. Members noted the continuing need to support the work of the Bible schools, but also stated that the churches needed to recognize that the Bible schools could not adequately provide the necessary preparation for church workers and that the college was fulfilling an essential task for the church. Beyond the needs of the Mennonite Brethren Church, however, the committee heard a strong call to take a leadership role in the broader evangelical world and to counteract the negative influences that were making inroads among many Christians.[43]

After three years as president, J. B. Toews submitted his resignation to the committee, much to their dismay. The committee asked him to reconsider, at least to continue for another year, but Toews was convinced that his call to become the pastor of the Reedley Mennonite Brethren Church in California was a call from God. In fact, the reasons for his departure were not that simple. In his autobiography, Toews details the struggles that led to his decision. In a poignant statement, he remarked,

41. T. D. Regehr, *Mennonites in Canada, 1939–1970: A People Transformed* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 262, citing J. J. Thiesen papers, 3 October 1945.

42. Toews, *JB*, 135.

43. College Committee Minutes, 19–20 February 1948, Vol. 57, Fld. 1, CMBS, Winnipeg.

"I could not reconcile myself to the narrow vision of the board to whom I was responsible. They demanded a full report on the language question at every board meeting. How many chapels were conducted in English and how many in German?" On one occasion, the committee chairman stated, "You have been given to us as a brother who will save the Mennonite Brethren conference from anglicization" (*verenglishen*). According to Toews, "I continued to work hard but began to question whether it was my assignment to wear myself out in the culture struggle that I saw as fruitless."[44]

Soon, various rumours circulated about the real reasons for Toews's resignation, which the committee sought to quell by making a statement at the July convention. A letter from Toews to the board was read at the convention, but it only referred to his sense of call to the pastorate and the overwhelming administrative responsibilities during the pioneer period of the college's existence.[45] The rumours about the manner of Toews's departure continued for some time, and, in February 1949, C. A. DeFehr reported that Toews was not pleased that his letter, intended for the board, had been read at the convention. H. H. Janzen was asked to write to Toews to explain the action and to wish him well.[46]

44. Toews, *JB*, 136–139.

45. *Yearbook: Canadian Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America, 38th Convention* (1948), 49–50.

46. College Committee Minutes, 23 February 1949, Vol. 57, Fld. 1, CMBS, Winnipeg.

4

A Period of Stability: Henry H. Janzen, 1948–1956

The college committee first approached Reuben M. Baerg to assume the MBBC presidency, but he declined. The board then approached Henry H. Janzen (1901–1975). Reluctantly, Janzen accepted on an interim basis until the committee could find a permanent replacement. Janzen recommended a decentralization of the administration so that his task could be made easier.[1]

Janzen had already served the college for two years when he was invited to become interim president. He was a key individual in obtaining the support of the Ontario constituency for the college because he had been moderator of the Ontario conference and pastor of the Kitchener Church. His academic and administrative qualifications were not as strong as those of his predecessors. His education included three years at the *Kommerzschule* in Halbstadt, Ukraine, but he had no formal theological education, being essentially self-educated. By 1953, the college catalogue listed Janzen's credentials as an honorary BTh degree from MBBC (1949) and a DD (Doctor of Divinity) degree from the Bible University in Amber, India (1953).

Janzen's theological perspectives were essentially based on the writings of John Nelson Darby, as mediated through Jacob W. Reimer and others.[2] According to David Ewert, "In contrast to A. H. Unruh, who read the writings of theologians such as Brunner and Barth, Janzen was always a bit wary of learned theologians."[3] He had led the establishment of the Russian Bible Institute in Toronto, which he served for four

1. Executive Committee Minutes, 13 April 1948, Vol. 57, Fld. 1, CMBS, Winnipeg.

2. For a brief biography, see David Ewert, "Henry H. Janzen (1901–1975)," in *Honour Such People* (Winnipeg, MB: Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies, 1997), 37–51; and Vic Froese, "Henry H. Janzen: By the Grace of God I am what I am," in *Canadian Mennonite Brethren, 1910–2010: Leaders Who Shaped Us*, ed. Harold Jantz (Winnipeg, MB: Kindred Productions, 2010), 147–157.

3. Ewert, *Honour Such People*, 49.

years. He was less articulate in English than was J. B. Toews. His main passion was evangelism, missions, and pastoral ministries. He was a popular preacher. During his tenure as president, he took leave for extended ministries with MCC, the Mennonite Brethren Board of Welfare, and the Board of Missions in Europe. These trips involved ministry to refugees who had arrived in western Europe after the war.[4] In later years, he spent extensive periods of ministry in Europe.

Henry H. Janzen (MAID CMBS NP026-20-28)

Given the length of Janzen's tenure as president, it is surprising that he left a much less significant mark on the college than most of the other presidents in the history of the institution. Toews had established a strong program and faculty in his three years. Constituency support was relatively strong. Many young people had begun to see the college as an attractive alternative for further study. Repeatedly, members of the committee expressed worries about the possible negative repercussions after the departure of Toews. However, the student enrolment during Janzen's tenure was relatively constant. According to Janzen's report, there were 112 students enrolled in 1948–1949.[5] The next year, this increased to over 140 students. Then enrolment declined for two years before increasing to over 140 again in 1953–1954.

Janzen remained a reluctant president for his entire tenure. In 1950, he was still referred to as "Acting President," and, for a time, A. H. Unruh was variously referred to as Vice President or Honorary President.[6] As such, Unruh usually prepared a separate report for the committee and the conference. Janzen also asked the committee to appoint Gerhard

4. Froese, "By the Grace of God I am what I am," 152; and Ewert, *Honour Such People*, 48.

5. See Janzen's report to the College Committee, 23 February 1949, Vol. 57, Fld. 1, CMBS, Winnipeg.

6. See, for example, the annual catalogues from 1949–1955, Vol. 117, Flds. 1 and 2, CMBS, Winnipeg.

Huebert as dean of curriculum.[7] When he received a call to go to Europe to minister to the many refugees there, the committee reluctantly granted him a year's leave. Jacob H. Quiring was appointed interim president for 1951–1952.

College Committee, 1948. Front Row (l-r): John M. Neufeld, Abraham H. Unruh, Johann P. Braun, Heinrich P. Toews, and J. B. Toews. Back row: Heinrich Thielmann, Bernhard B. Fast, Jacob H. Epp, Henry H. Janzen, and Abram G. Martens. (MAID CMBS NP026-04-08)

The main developments during Janzen's term included the completion of the accreditation process with the American Association of Bible Colleges (AABC, later the Association for Biblical Higher Education, ABHE) and the significant influx of young people who had arrived as refugees after the war. The accreditation issue had been a high-priority concern since the beginning of the college. By early 1950, a formal application was submitted and was approved later that year. A major concern of the accrediting committee was the inadequate library. Every year, there were significant efforts to add to the collection. In 1955, Herb Giesbrecht was appointed as librarian.

In February 1950, J. A. Toews, who had joined the faculty in 1947, provided an interesting perspective on the college's program and purpose.[8] First, Toews repeated the essential purpose of the college—to teach

7. Report to the College Committee, 23–25 February 1949, Vol. 57, Fld. 1, CMBS, Winnipeg. This was likely not equivalent to the position of academic dean to which F. C. Peters was appointed later.

8. J. A. Toews, "Bible College der Menn. Brüder Gemeinden," *Mennonitische Rundschau* (15 February 1950), 1, 9.

"scriptural theology." The curriculum, he stated, was almost identical to that of a seminary. The only difference was the entrance requirements. Seminary entrance required four years of university, whereas graduation with a theology degree from MBBC required only two years of university training.

More surprising was Toews's promotion of the college as an institution providing general education for those who desired it. The college, he stated, provided eleven subjects in its junior college division.[9] Subjects in this area included psychology, philosophy, modern history, German and English literature, etc. These subjects provided a "Christian world view" and could be transferred for credit to Tabor College or to another university. Toews also mentioned language courses such as Greek, Russian, and French, in addition to regular instruction in English and German. The implication was that, although the college did not have a formal junior college department, the faculty clearly had a vision for the college that was broader than the formal statement of objectives.

The music department under the leadership of Ben Horch was remarkably successful during the first decade.[10] But this created its own problems. There was some concern that the music department might become too strong. The committee was relieved when Horch stated, "It has been realized, with one graduating class in music behind us, that the music course is more than adequate for the present need of our churches."[11] Nevertheless, the music faculty appealed for the purchase of more pianos and cited the strong demand for voice lessons. In 1950, the college choir produced its first recording.[12] But all was not well.

In February 1950, Horch complained that students preferred to sing in the English language and, therefore, were attracted to American music. Choirs in the churches were still singing in German and had only a small repertoire of good American choral works translated into German. The real need was for conductors to be exposed to the great history of achievement of German sacred music ("the priceless heritage of *Chorale*"). Horch recommended several alternative steps to achieve this: "1) Invite a church musician connected to the evangelical movements in Germany to spend some time in Canada. 2) Send a choir conductor to live in Germany for a year and 'absorb what he can that would be of

9. This was not a formally established division of the college.

10. For a detailed biography of Horch, including a thorough treatment of his MBBC phase, see Peter Letkemann, *The Ben Horch Story* (Winnipeg, MB: Old Oak Publishing, 2007).

11. College Committee Minutes, 23–25 February 1949, Vol. 57, Fld. 1, CMBS, Winnipeg.

12. College Committee Minutes, 26 July 1950, Vol. 57, Fld. 1, CMBS, Winnipeg.

value for us.' 3) Find recordings of German sacred music that could be circulated to choir conductors in Canada."[13]

In response, the committee considered sending Horch to Germany for a year. But two months later, the college executive received notice of Horch's resignation and his intent to follow an invitation to teach in Fresno. The committee quickly sought a replacement for Horch, but, by August, Horch had reconsidered and indicated that he would stay. Therefore, the plan to go to Germany was revived. In April 1951, Ben and Esther appeared before the committee and presented a strong case to study German church music. According to the minutes, "Brother Horch pointed out the importance of proper church music, which has its roots in the German people and the German language. German church music has high ideals, and our young people respect these ideals. They much prefer it to American church music."[14]

The committee agreed to arrange a term of study in Germany for both Ben and Esther Horch. They left in the fall of 1951, returning in time for the fall term in 1952. During their absence, interest in music continued and expectations were high for their return. However, the college report indicated that the high profile of music created a potential danger. The aesthetic appeal of music might diminish the religious aspects. As long as Horch was the head of the department, the danger would be minimal, but vigilance was necessary to keep the music department from overwhelming the other departments.[15]

Perhaps the strongest supporter of the music department under the leadership of Horch was A. H. Unruh. A major section of his report to the committee in February 1953 defended the positive contribution of the music department. He stated, "The music department under the leadership of Director Ben Horch has sought to elevate church music and has also promoted nature songs, so that the awe-inspiring hymns of worship are sung in the churches and the superficial music, which is so easily accepted in Mennonite Brethren churches, is avoided."[16]

Unruh also approved of the performance of cantatas or oratorios for larger audiences. The music department, he noted, had not only brought an increase in enrolment but had also opened the doors for mission in the surrounding areas. Good music, he stated, teaches students to distinguish

13. Report of the Music Department to the College Committee, 13 February 1950, Vol. 57, Fld. 1, CMBS, Winnipeg.

14. Executive Committee Minutes, 17 April 1951, Vol. 57, Fld. 2, CMBS, Winnipeg.

15. College Committee Minutes, 27 February to 1 March 1952, Vol. 57, Fld. 2, CMBS, Winnipeg.

16. College Committee Minutes, 27 February 1952, Vol. 57, Fld. 2, CMBS, Winnipeg.

between good and evil, and it has the potential to help them grow in their faith. He continued, "During this time when students are surrounded by luring music and when radios in our homes awaken and promote superficial music, it is very worthy for them to be introduced to good music that worships the Lord. If the school succeeds in gaining support for worthy music and in opening the soul for the same, it will have given much to the churches."[17]

By early 1954, Horch was convinced that his work at the college needed to end. H. H. Janzen was asked to take responsibility for the department until a new head could be appointed. Many were concerned about what impact this would have on music enrolment, but Janzen assured the conference that music would continue as before. Young people who had attended the college would gradually take on the role previously filled by Horch.[18] But music enrolment gradually declined. Horch freelanced in the following year, although he continued to conduct the Oratorio choir.[19] His dream was to create a music school with connections to the college. But the faculty and college committee declined to enter into such an agreement. Henry Voth from Herbert, Saskatchewan, became the director until Victor Martens returned from studies in Germany.

The college continued to struggle with the language transition. Many leaders were concerned about retaining the German language as a bulwark against acculturation and the erosion of faith. A report to the committee indicated that out of a total of 39 courses offered in 1950–1951, 31 were taught in English. The enrolment in these courses was generally much higher than in the courses taught in German.[20] Committee minutes and reports continued to be almost entirely in German.

In 1952, the college began another avenue of education, one that was intended to serve ministers, deacons, and other church workers, as well as a broader constituency. It began to publish *The Voice*, a college journal designed "to set forth the doctrinal position of the institution." *The Voice* was published by the college until 1971. The first editor of *The Voice* (J. H. Quiring) wrote, "It is our sincere intention to publish devotional, expositional, doctrinal, denominational, and other articles" to serve a larger number of Christian workers.[21] This publication was

17. Letkemann, *Ben Horch Story*, 295.

18. *Yearbook: Canadian Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America, 44th Convention* (1954), 34.

19. Letkemann, *Ben Horch Story*, 301.

20. See report to College Committee, 7–9 February 1951, Vol. 57, Fld. 2, CMBS, Winnipeg.

21. *The Voice of the Mennonite Brethren Bible College* 1, no. 2 (January–February 1952): 2.

actually a sequel to the *Olive Leaf*, which was a student publication with a faculty advisor. The *Olive Leaf* continued as a separate section of *The Voice* until the following year. During the years that it was published, *The Voice* was widely read, especially by church ministers.

A major change in the status of the college came in 1954 when the Canadian conference withdrew its formal support of Tabor College and declined to participate with the US in seminary education. The result was that MBBC was more generally recognized as the institution that prepared Canadian young people for ministry.

MBBC's relationship to Bible schools emerged as an issue occasionally but did not become a critical issue during Janzen's administration. However, when the question of eligibility for membership on the college committee emerged, concern was expressed about a possible conflict of interest if Bible school teachers were elected to serve on the committee. In February 1955, committee members engaged in a vigorous discussion regarding the college's entrance requirements. Some committee members felt that the college should only admit students who had graduated from a Bible school. This led to a discussion of the need to coordinate the high school, Bible school, and college programs. Many unsuccessful efforts had been made in the past, noted the committee. Nevertheless, there should be more attempts to streamline the programs of individual Bible schools to facilitate entrance to the college. The Bible schools should only accept high school graduates and should lengthen their school terms to ten months. The college, for its part, needed to safeguard its AABC accreditation. The committee instructed the faculty to prepare a basis for coordinating the whole educational program of the conference.[22] This was later described as the tiered structure of education.

In July 1955, a coordinating plan for education in the conference was submitted by the faculty and accepted by the committee. It listed the following circumstances as a basis for their recommendations:

1) *The Bible schools are varied in their structures and governance. They are independent schools, some owned by societies, some church-sponsored, and some owned by district conferences.*
2) *The various attempts to coordinate programs have been unsuccessful.*
3) *Only a small number of Bible school students later enrolled in the college. Those who did enroll had not encountered any major problems regarding transfer of credits. The issue therefore did not arise from students.*
4) *The college was obligated to abide by the regulations of the accrediting body (AABC).*

22. College Committee Minutes, 14–15 February 1955, Vol. 57, Fld. 2, CMBS, Winnipeg.

On this basis, the faculty offered the following recommendations:

> *1) The college would seek to abide by the requirements of Bible colleges in America.*
> *2) The college would offer transfer credits based on the regulations of the accrediting association. It would also seek to foster good relations with the Bible schools.*
> *3) The issue of coordination would be set aside until such time as a competent education committee could be appointed. This committee would be charged with making recommendations related to qualifications of instructors, course offerings, textbooks, teaching methods, and general expectations for students.*[23]

The committee and faculty encouraged cooperation and coordination with the other "higher Bible colleges" (Tabor College and Pacific Bible Institute). Coordination of academic programs and entrance requirements was desirable, but there was no interest in extending this to funding and board governance.[24]

However, the college's success did not only depend on streamlining educational efforts within its own constituency. Other schools, both religious and secular, were also becoming attractive alternatives for many young people. Why were students attracted to other schools? Some reasons were obvious while others were not as well understood. Often young people were interested in careers that they could not prepare for at Mennonite Brethren institutions. Some students were attracted to schools with a stronger mission emphasis, presumably including schools like Prairie Bible Institute in Three Hills, Alberta. Still others sought a broader non-denominational or interdenominational environment.[25]

In 1952, Janzen wondered whether the college should consider offering a BA degree. This was probably the first time a president had formally posed the question. In February 1953, Janzen repeated his concern, stating that this would enable students to choose a career. It was ironic that a president who had less formal academic training than any other president in the history of MBBC should suggest such a venture. He cited additional factors that would support such a move:

> *Another circumstance has developed that supports such a move. The United States Congress has passed a law that prohibits any foreign student from enrolling in a school unless he can show that he has ample funds to pay for it. Thereby another door is closed for our young people to attend Tabor College. Should we already introduce secular courses? The faculty is available. If we appoint another teacher*

23. College Committee Minutes, 1 July 1955, Vol. 57, Fld. 2, CMBS, Winnipeg.
24. College Committee Minutes, 7 February 1951, Vol. 57, Fld. 2, CMBS, Winnipeg.
25. College Committee Minutes, 7–9 February 1951, Vol. 57, Fld. 2, CMBS, Winnipeg.

who is qualified to teach in this area and if we affiliate this department with a university, then we could accomplish much.[26]

Registrar J. H. Quiring reported that enrolment had reached a plateau and many students enrolled for only one year. More students might be attracted if the college's program would be expanded to meet the needs of more young people.[27] Once again, in his concluding observations to the committee in February 1954, Janzen recommended that the committee together with the entire faculty consider whether to expand the college program. They should decide whether it would be good to expand the secular offerings of the school and whether the music department should be expanded.[28]

Ben Horch conducing the Mennonite Symphony Orchestra and the MBBC Oratorio Choir, 1955. They performed Handel's* Messiah *at Grace United Church, Winnipeg. (MAID CMBS NP026-09-83)

The committee debated the issues at some length in the presence of faculty. Horch maintained that the music department was constantly growing and was the best in western Canada. It was drawing students away from the theology department, and he offered his resignation, although he was willing to direct the Oratorio choir.[29] Every school, he stated, had a unique drawing factor. Regrettably, music had become the college's main drawing card. For some schools, sports were the main drawing card. However, MBBC should not have music as its main unifying factor,

26. Report to the College Committee, 23–24 February 1953, Vol. 57, Fld. 2, CMBS, Winnipeg.
27. Ibid.
28. Report to the College Committee, 22–24 February 1954, Vol. 57, Fld. 2, CMBS, Winnipeg.
29. Ibid.

he argued. The main program of the college ought to be theological formation, which was now threatened by two disciplines—music and secular or general education studies. The committee and faculty agreed, concluding that theology should remain the main emphasis at MBBC. Furthermore, the college should reduce the music program and only offer a music diploma.[30]

In the final year of President Janzen's administration, a major addition to the MBBC campus was completed. The library building on Kelvin Street (later Henderson Highway) housed an auditorium, music rooms, offices, and the library. (MAID CMBS NP026-01-88)

The issue of expanding the college's program appeared on the agenda again in Janzen's final year (1956). Based on the chair's report, the committee wondered whether the college should become a "Junior College." It was unclear just what this might mean. But the committee decided to continue as a theological school.

While student attendance at other institutions was increasing, the college also reported that there was a shift in the enrolment patterns at the college. Fewer students were opting for the theology and mission (BTh) programs, and more were opting for the religious education (BRE) program. The reason appeared to be that there was little demand for preachers or pastors and that the mission board did not have adequate resources to send graduates abroad. The committee recommended that church leaders encourage young people to take their theological training at the college. There was also a shift in the average age and status of students. The average age was lower, most students had completed high school, and there were fewer married students.

30. Ibid.

After eight years as a reluctant president, Janzen was convinced that he needed to move on. Internally, it seemed, his term was marked by positive relationships and confidence in his leadership, even though his primary passion and skills were not suited for an academic environment. The college was facing significant challenges in the face of profound social and religious changes.[31] But a transition in leadership by itself did not signal the emergence of a major crisis.

31. See Janzen's letter to the College Committee, *Yearbook: Canadian Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America, 46th Convention* (1956), 83–84.

5

An Anabaptist College: John A. Toews, 1956–1963

John A. Toews (1912–1979) was officially appointed as the new MBBC president at the Canadian conference sessions in Clearbrook, British Columbia, in July 1956, although his formal duties did not begin until September. He was quite familiar with the college since he had already served on the faculty for nine years. He was also fully bilingual and was well connected with the leaders of the 1920s immigrants from Russia. He was a transitional leader whose roots were in Russia but whose identity was largely shaped in the North American context. Toews had ministered to the conscientious objectors during World War II and had served in various conference ministries prior to his appointment to the college in 1947.

Academically, Toews was well suited for his appointment. In 1950, he received a BD degree from United College in Winnipeg (later University of Winnipeg), and, in 1957, he earned an MA degree in history from the University of Manitoba. Later, he earned a PhD degree in history from the University of Minnesota (1964). His theological perspective was probably best defined as evangelical Anabaptism. He interacted extensively with Mennonite leaders such as Harold Bender and Erland Waltner and was active in organizations such as the Mennonite World Conference.[1] He very actively promoted the "Anabaptist Vision" as articulated by Bender, and he was frequently critical of North American evangelicalism and fundamentalism. Toews did much to promote the

1. See biography by his daughter, Elfrieda Toews-Nafziger, *A Man of his Word: A Biography of John A. Toews* (Winnipeg, MB: Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies, 1992). See also David Ewert, "John A. Toews (1912–1979)," in *Honour Such People* (Winnipeg, MB: Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies, 1997), 67–81; Rudy Wiebe, "John A. Toews: A Man of his Word," in *Canadian Mennonite Brethren, 1910–2010: Leaders Who Shaped Us*, ed. Harold Jantz (Winnipeg, MB: Kindred Productions, 2010), 159–170; and Abe J. Dueck, Herbert Giesbrecht, and Allen R. Guenther, eds., *People of the Way: Selected Essays and Addresses by John A. Toews* (Winnipeg, MB: Historical Committee, 1981).

John A. Toews (MAID CMBS NP026-02-30)

teaching of nonresistance and peace in the constituency. This earned him friends as well as opponents in the Mennonite Brethren constituency. During his tenure, the college identity as an Anabaptist institution became firmly established.[2]

In somewhat typical fashion for leaders of his day, Toews accepted his appointment with expressions of humility, stating that he lacked adequate ability for the task. There were no grandiose statements about a new vision for the college.[3] "The purpose of the college," he stated, "is to prepare workers for the Kingdom of God for service in the church and for service in home missions and foreign missions." Furthermore, this "will remain the purpose for the future." It must serve this purpose even though the curriculum might change, he argued.

However, it did not take long before Toews seemed to depart from his commitment made at the convention in 1956. At the first committee sessions following his appointment, Toews stated that he did not anticipate any immediate radical changes. In the future, however, it would be necessary to gear the program to serve two groups: 1) those who would prepare for special church-related ministries; and 2) those who needed a biblical orientation and preparation for their careers.

To emphasize continuity with the past, he reminded the committee that there had been frequent attempts in the past to achieve university accreditation for liberal arts courses. Now, renewed attempts were being made to become accredited with United College in Winnipeg. This might necessitate some adjustments but nothing major.[4] He also indicated that

2. See Abe J. Dueck, "Canadian Mennonites and the Anabaptist Vision," *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 13 (1995): 75–77.

3. *Yearbook: Canadian Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America, 46th Convention* (1956), 85–86.

4. Report to the College Committee, 8–9 February 1957, Vol. 57, Fld. 2, CMBS, Winnipeg.

MBBC Ministers' Course, 11–22 February 1957. The teachers are in the front row, with the exception of one at either end. First row (l-r): Bernhard Epp, Henry Voth, Herbert Giesbrecht, David Ewert, Jacob H. Quiring, Abraham H. Unruh, John A. Toews, Henry R. Baerg, Victor Toews, Isaac W. Redekopp, and Jacob P. Epp. Second row: Dietrich J. Klassen, P. A. Unger, Frank J. Wiens, Jacob J. Nikkel, William Buller, Jacob G. Klassen, David Dick, Peter P. Goertz, Isaac H. Block, Abram A. Loewen, F. Kroeker, and William W. Schroeder. Third row: Alvin Penner, Frank Froese, Johann J. Wiebe, Frank H. Friesen, P. Pauls, William Wiens, Henry A. Regehr, J. Wiebe, Abe H. Konrad, Peter C. Penner, John J. Neufeld, Gerhard Dirks, John B. Epp, and Nick Dyck. Fourth row: A. P. Unger, Peter P. Dueck, Heinrich H. Siemens, Henry P. Penner, F. D. Reimer, P. L. Friesen, Henry G. Bartsch, Nickolai Redekopp, Jacob J. Loewen, Peter J. Esau, Heinrich H. Enns, C. P. Dyck, and A. Plett. (MAID CMBS NP026-15-09)

the theology program should be expanded with the potential to offer a BD degree if the committee approved. The college faculty was willing to devote efforts toward the same during the following year.

The committee's response was to approve efforts to seek accreditation with United College, as long as it did not change the fundamental character of MBBC and make it a liberal arts college instead of a theological college.[5] Interestingly, the committee also endorsed the proposal to work quickly toward a BD program but warned that it should be done quietly until a concrete proposal emerged.

In 1956, the Canadian conference established a "neutral" committee to coordinate the educational efforts of the conference.[6] The committee's first report (1957) included a section on a potential liberal arts program. It found that there was a lack of unity on the issue but that there was a definite need, as had already been expressed by H. H. Janzen. The quest for a secular education would come to the forefront in the next decade, the report stated. However, the committee was not able to come with a recommendation but agreed that the issue needed to be addressed.[7]

The report of the education committee in 1958 included some observations regarding liberal arts and the tendency toward professionalization of the ministry. Regarding the former, it expressed amazement at how rapidly the enrolment of young people at various universities was increasing. The committee wondered about the kinds of influences students were exposed to in these classes, in extracurricular activities, and in their relationships with other students. These were characterized as "worldly." The churches, it stated, would certainly feel the impact in later years. Had the conference adequately responded to the challenge?

In 1959, a newly formed education committee stated, "In view of the increasing interest among our young people in a liberal arts education, and in view of the invitation from other Mennonite groups to join them in the building of a residential college on the campus of an existing university, . . . we recommend . . . that a study conference be held."[8]

The invitation to Mennonite Brethren to join other Mennonite groups in forming a liberal arts residential college was a reference to the efforts by Ontario Mennonites to establish a cooperative venture on the

5. College Committee Minutes, 8–9 February 1957, Vol. 57, Fld. 2, CMBS, Winnipeg.

6. *Yearbook: Canadian Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America, 46th Convention* (1956), 122.

7. *Yearbook: Canadian Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America, 47th Convention* (1957), 88.

8. *Yearbook: Canadian Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America, 49th Convention* (1959), 186.

campus of the University of Waterloo. In a guest editorial in the *Mennonite Observer*, Frank C. Peters, who was then a professor at MBBC, wrote on the advantages and disadvantages of establishing a liberal arts college.[9] More and more young people were attending Canadian universities, he noted. And although the demand for liberal arts education was increasing, he argued that the real justification for the church to get involved was because it could provide a "plus factor." This plus factor was the church's capacity to find people to teach in such a college who were well trained in their subject areas plus had a strong Christian faith. He believed that such people were available.

A second criterion for the church to become involved in liberal arts education was the availability of adequate financial resources. Again, Peters believed that Canadian Mennonite Brethren would be able to support such an institution. He cited statistics that showed that Canadian Mennonite Brethren were contributing much less to higher education than American Mennonite Brethren.

Peters then referred to two potential problem areas. One was the matter of control, specifically whether such a college should be an all-Mennonite venture. In this regard, Peters clearly stated his preference for an institution that would be owned and operated solely by the Mennonite Brethren conference. "Schools need stability and should not always feel the reverberations of inter-Mennonite conflicts," he argued.

Finally, Peters raised the question of campus ethics. He claimed, "It is more difficult to maintain standards acceptable to the supporting constituency on a liberal arts campus than on a Bible college campus. Such factors as more liberal entrance requirements, a more secular curriculum, and often an expanded program of recreation and entertainment tend to complicate matters."

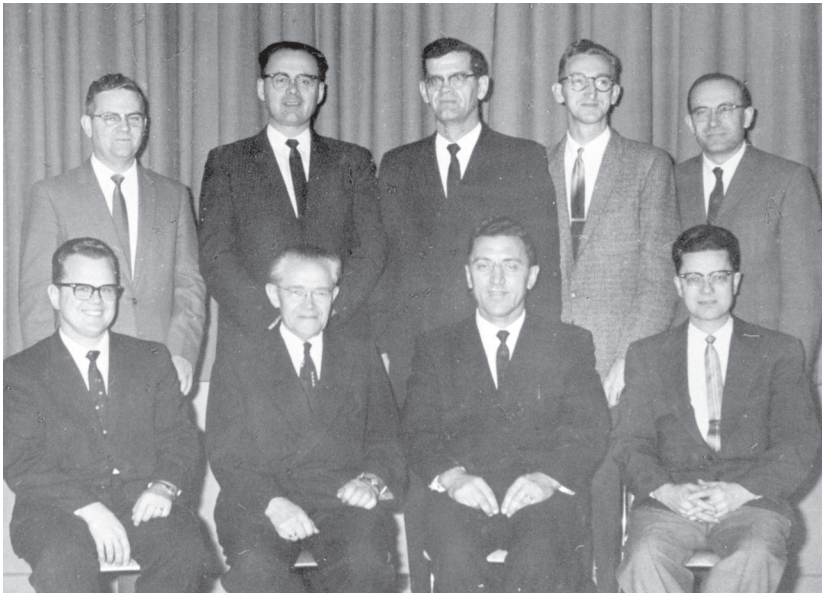
The study commission met in February 1960. Papers were presented on topics such as the objectives of a liberal arts school, student and staff potential, location, and costs.[10] Various alternatives were discussed: 1) appointment of a college chaplain, 2) spiritual supervision by local churches, 3) stronger liberal arts division at MBBC, and 4) a cooperative venture with other denominations.

As already indicated, the Ontario Mennonite Brethren conference participated in the early negotiations to establish Conrad Grebel College. This was a cooperative venture with other Ontario Mennonite groups

9. F. C. Peters, "Mennonite Liberal Arts Education in Canada," *Mennonite Observer* (25 September 1959), 2.

10. *Yearbook: Canadian Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America, 50th Convention* (1960), 165–168.

to develop an institution on the campus of the University of Waterloo. This option was not well supported by Mennonite Brethren, and Ontario formally opted out in 1961.[11] A cooperative venture with other denominations was, therefore, no longer considered.[12] The committee ultimately agreed that the best alternative was to establish a liberal arts college. However, the delegate discussion led to a decision to establish a liberal arts department at MBBC and to direct students to Tabor College for the last two years of their secular or general education.[13] But the delegates permitted the college to investigate affiliating with other Canadian universities.



MBBC faculty, 1960–1961. Front row (l-r): Victor Martens, Cornelius Wall, John A. Toews, and Herb Giesbrecht. Back row: Henry R. Baerg, Frank C. Peters, Jacob J. Toews, Peter Klassen, and David Ewert. (MAID CMBS NP026-02-44)

Work toward university accreditation at MBBC moved slowly for several years. Continued conversations with the University of Manitoba seemed to promise some success. A formal application was submitted by January 1959, but the final response was that the college would have to move to the university campus to receive accreditation. A third alternative, to establish a relationship with Waterloo Lutheran University (eventually Wilfrid Laurier University), was investigated. A number of

11. *Yearbook: Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of Ontario* (June 1961), 87.

12. *Yearbook: Canadian Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America, 50th Convention* (1960), 168.

13. Ibid., 171.

former MBBC students had already been able to negotiate some credit for their courses. At the same time, some contacts were also made with the University of British Columbia. The response was that credit would only be given if the University of Manitoba would do so.

In December 1960, the college proposed the appointment of an academic dean to facilitate a liberal arts department. The duties would be to coordinate the academic program and to establish and maintain the necessary relationships between the college and the university. In January, Frank C. Peters was appointed as the first academic dean of the college.[14] Soon, there was progress in the negotiations with Waterloo Lutheran University, and, by January 1961, a formal affiliation was approved by the university. A major condition of the agreement was that the college would be required to operate under a dual name. The university indicated that it could not affiliate with a Bible college. The college would have to change its name to "Mennonite Brethren Bible College and College of Arts." The conference approved the affiliation in July without significant debate.[15] It appeared that this signaled a subtle change in the objectives of the college without formal debate or recognition of the implications.

The affiliation with Waterloo led to increased enrolment in arts courses and in a general awareness of the arts segment of the curriculum at the college. Beginning in 1962, the enrolment reports regularly indicated the number of course enrolments in arts courses. In the first year (1961–1962), there were 61 arts course enrolments, and, in 1962–1963, there were 69. However, the affiliation with WLU did not remove all obstacles to the transfer of credit at other universities. Even the University of Manitoba objected to an out-of-province affiliation.

The president insisted that the expansion of the academic program had not changed the central objective of the college. The purpose was still to prepare young people "for service in the Kingdom of God as ministers, missionaries, choir leaders, and other ministries" as was stated in the catalogue. Toews remarked, "We are living, however, in an age of rapid cultural, economic, and educational change, and a re-orientation in our philosophy of Christian education, as well as a re-thinking of the program to achieve the above objective is not only desirable, but imperative."[16]

14. Janzen had appointed Gerhard Huebert as dean of curriculum, but that was a more restricted role than the later role of the academic dean.

15. *Yearbook: Canadian Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America, 51st Convention* (1961), 175–176.

16. Report to the College Committee, 25–26 January 1963, Vol. 57, Fld. 3, CMBS, Winnipeg.

Towards a philosophy of education

In 1962, the executive of the committee asked F. C. Peters to prepare a paper on the philosophy of education at MBBC. The paper, entitled "Towards a Philosophy of Education of MBBC," was presented at the January 1963 committee meetings. This was the first time that an attempt was made to articulate the objectives of MBBC in such detail.[17]

In the section on "Objectives," Peters immediately addressed the thorny question of the role of liberal arts. "A question has been raised by some," he stated, "whether the original Bible college aim has given way to liberal arts objectives." He began his response by describing a liberal education.

> *Historically, a liberal education was intellectual, not manual, and was associated with the leisure which "free" men enjoyed. However, lest we accept too narrow a view of liberal education, it should be added that such education was also intended to make men free; free from superstition, ignorance and prejudice; free to think for himself. The type of education which humanizes a person has come to be called liberal education, or the liberal arts. It has consisted of the arts of reading, writing, listening, speaking, and figuring, and of the intellectual and artistic tradition that we inherit.*[18]

Turning to Bible college education, Peters stated that it "seeks to combine elements of the liberal education ideal with a unique emphasis guided by a central conviction that man's purpose here on earth cannot be understood outside of the context of God's revelation, the Scriptures."

Although the records to guide the search for the philosophy of the college may be "meager" and "nebulous," he stated, the fact that it was to be a "higher Bible school" indicated that the framework was to be wider than that of the Bible schools. This objective, he stated, had never been changed by the brotherhood.

In conclusion, Peters wrote,

> *The immediate or operational objective of the Bible college is to prepare students for an effective witness in specific Christian ministries <u>but also for a witness of informed and committed disciples in the general stream of life</u>* [emphasis mine]. *The liberal arts courses, or the general education program, is viewed in the Bible college setting both as cultural education which all educated people should have and as an understanding of the world in which and to which the Christian seeks to witness. It is not liberal arts course and Bible college course but rather one program*

17. The paper is reproduced in full in John George Doerksen, "Mennonite Brethren Bible College and College of Arts: Its History, Philosophy, and Development" (PhD dissertation, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, 1968), Appendix D, 179–207.

18. Ibid., 183.

toward a Bible college objective. The college is not a liberal arts institution, nor can it ever be until the basic objectives are changed and supplanted by liberal arts ideals.[19]

These statements by Peters appeared to go beyond the stated or implied objectives that governed the early years of the college. While it articulated a unified educational objective, it minimized the specific objective of training for church-related ministries and widened the door for a general education that would serve a broad spectrum of young people.

Turning to the curriculum to implement the objectives of a Bible college, Peters outlined four specific programs: 1) general education, 2) music, 3) Christian education, and 4) theology. The general education program would basically consist of liberal arts courses or courses in the humanities and social sciences, including history, psychology, philosophy, languages, etc. All theology students, he suggested, should have at least one year of arts before taking theology courses. This would achieve several results. Students might not flounder as much in their first attempts to study theology at the college level and would read and write better. Also, it would lend "more dignity to Bible courses" and set the college courses apart from the Bible school courses.[20]

The music program, Peters argued, required a clearer delineation than other programs. It should be a means of communicating the gospel, be an aid to worship, be an avenue of self-expression, and be a socializing force aiding fellowship.

The Christian education program should be designed to prepare students for the educational and missionary ministry of the local church. Courses should emphasize Bible content, pedagogical skills, psychology to understand people, as well as philosophy and history.

The primary objective of the theology program, Peters stated, was to prepare people "for a ministry and witness in the church."[21] Peters provided little detail for this program, perhaps because he felt that its character and objectives were most easily understood. A brief paragraph referenced the BD program as follows: "The final BD year is considered a year of integration for a few students who have completed the arts program in some university or college and feel definitely called to the ministry."[22]

19. Ibid., 185.
20. Ibid., 190–191.
21. Ibid., 193.
22. Ibid. 194.

The philosophy of education described by Peters still left considerable ambiguity about the difference between a Bible college and a Christian liberal arts college. It seemed to imply that liberal arts courses were intrinsically secular, and, therefore, theology courses were not arts courses. However, several MBBC theology courses were also accredited arts courses. At times, in negotiations with universities, the critical issue was the degree to which these courses were confessionally oriented. Were they religious studies courses that were taught within narrow confessional boundaries? And would courses like history and philosophy also be confessionally oriented? Peters described the Bible college as one which would combine elements of the liberal education ideal with a unique emphasis guided by a central conviction based on the Scriptures. But could this also be the objective of a Christian liberal arts college? Peters's analysis seemed to draw the line between a secular concept of a liberal arts education and a Christian liberal arts education. Otherwise, the main difference between a Bible college program and a Christian liberal arts institution might simply be the number of religious studies (theology?) courses taught or required in their respective programs.

The lengthy deliberations at the committee meeting revealed some uneasiness about the direction and perception of the college. Had the image of the college changed because of its affiliation? Some felt that the changed perception of the college as a liberal arts institution was not based on a clear understanding of the facts.[23] The philosophy of education articulated by Peters was implicit in the operation of the college in the past, the committee concluded. Safeguarding the original purpose for the future could be achieved by a committed faculty and proper admissions policies and regulations.

The committee decided that the issue was important enough to appoint a commission to study the matter.[24] A commission of five members was appointed, including one faculty member (David Ewert), three college committee members, and the chair of the Canadian conference education committee.

A seminary program?

To a considerable degree in the 1930s and early 1940s, Tabor College functioned as a training institution for Canadian Mennonite Brethren who felt called to ministry and missions. In fact, the mission board required some education at Tabor for candidates going to the mission

23. College Committee Minutes, 25–26 January 1963, Vol. 57, Fld. 3, CMBS, Winnipeg.
24. Ibid.

field. As already indicated, this became a matter of some tension between the Canadian and American constituencies. One of the results was the establishment of the *Africa Missionsverein* for mission work in the Congo; it was based in Winkler and strongly supported by the Winkler Bible School.[25]

The report of the education committee in 1957 acknowledged that the conference had never seriously considered the need for a seminary. It noted that the (Old) Mennonite Church and the General Conference Mennonites had decided to work together to establish a seminary program. It also noted that the professionalization of the ministry could bring alienation between laity and clergy. But at this point there was no need to pursue the issue, it concluded.[26]

The question regarding the expansion of the college program to include a Bachelor of Divinity (BD) degree (i.e., a seminary department) was discussed briefly at the 1958 convention. J. A. Toews acknowledged that, in 1957, the General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America had instructed the various institutions to continue to operate as at present until a commission had completed its assignment relative to education.[27] He asked the delegates to clarify whether they still supported the original purpose of the college to train young people for the "higher calling" to various ministries in the church. If so, the present reality demanded a higher level of education, but this would not signal a change in objectives. The Canadian convention agreed to allow the committee to begin planning for a BD program in the future while adhering to the decision not to make immediate changes. This policy of not implementing any changes continued for several years. In 1961, however, the college asked the conference to review the issue because there were many requests for an expanded program.[28]

For almost 15 years, the most pervasive and controversial issue

25. The *Afrika Missionsverein* (Africa Missionary Society) was organized in 1934 as a private Canadian Mennonite Brethren mission board to operate the Bololo Congo Mission. On 1 January 1944, it turned the work over to the foreign mission board of the Mennonite Brethren conference. The Bololo Mission had been founded in 1933 as a private faith venture, but when the Conference mission board refused to take it over in spite of the appeals of the missionaries, the society was organized to do so. The society was managed by a board of directors with the following officers: G. J. Riemer secretary, and H. H. Janzen as chairman. Its publication was *Der Kleine Afrika-Bote*, 1935–1943.

26. *Yearbook: Canadian Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America, 47th Convention* (1957), 90.

27. *Yearbook: Canadian Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America, 48th Convention* (1958), 87.

28. *Yearbook: Canadian Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America, 51st Convention* (1961), 169ff.

concerning the future of the college was the seminary question. This was arguably the main issue that led to the "mid-life crisis" of the college during Victor Adrian's administration (1967–1972). The issue was eventually officially resolved when the General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches[29] established a unified seminary program in Fresno in 1975, although the issue continued to arise in various ways thereafter. At the same time, other controversial issues defied resolution, such as the role of liberal arts program and the relationship to the Bible schools.

In May 1961, the Board of Reference and Counsel of the General Conference met and prepared a preliminary recommendation to the respective area conferences. That recommendation, which was accepted by the Canadian conference in July, stated that the "present needs for higher theological training should be met by operating a coordinated training program at two campuses—Fresno, California, and Winnipeg, Manitoba." This led further to a recommendation "that the conference accept in principle that we introduce the BD course into our college."[30]

The BD program was finally introduced into the college in 1962–1963. The entrance requirement was a BA degree from a recognized institution. Former college students could receive as much as two years of credit.

Relationship to Bible schools

As already indicated, the study committee that was appointed in the first year of J. A. Toews administration in 1956 was unable to accomplish anything to unify the educational programs of the institutions. It reported that the lack of unity in the conference in its educational objectives had a negative impact on the youth, resulting in fragmented loyalties and influencing some to attend non-Mennonite Brethren institutions.

The education committee report at the next (1957) convention gave a comprehensive analysis of the various components that could comprise the educational experience of young people. Separate sections dealt with the family, the Sunday school, German school, high school, Bible school, liberal arts college, Mennonite Brethren Bible college, and seminary. Responses from some of the Bible schools regarding their purpose included preparation for church ministries and missions. Significant differences were noted between various schools in their goals and the length of their terms. This was obviously problematic in creating

29. In 1963, the General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America changed its name to the General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches.

30. *Yearbook: Canadian Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America, 51st Convention* (1961), 167–176.

a coordinated system and determining their relationship to the college. The Bible schools were reluctant to give up their individual character in responding to local needs.

The section on the Bible college identified the main issue as the relationship to the Bible schools and the transfer of credit to the college, given the diverse nature of Bible school instruction. The college needed to safeguard its own accreditation with other colleges and universities. The main purpose of the college—to prepare young people for ministry at home and abroad—was taken for granted. The conference accepted several recommendations, including a continued appeal to unify the educational programs of the Bible schools.[31] The committee was also concerned about the professionalization of the ministry. In the past, it stated, the church membership had sought to safeguard the teaching of the church rather than leaving it to academically trained theologians. Now, better trained individuals were needed. But if enrolment at Bible schools and the college did not increase, biblically informed members would become the exception rather than the rule. The responsibility of the Bible schools must be to provide biblical literacy to the laity. Some feared that various professionally trained individuals would replace lay workers in the churches.

MBBC statistics always indicated the number of students who had previously attended a Bible school. These remained relatively constant, usually between 51 and 57. The education committee reported in 1959 that it had made some progress in establishing some consistency in the programs of the various schools. This included the introduction of a standard curriculum "wherever possible," a uniform requirement for full-time enrolment, enabling transfer of credits between schools, and working on a constitution for an association of Bible schools.[32] But nothing was stated concerning the relationship of the Bible schools to MBBC.

Music after Horch: Henry Voth and Victor Martens

With the departure of Ben Horch in 1954, the music department entered a period of uncertainty and of diminished popularity. Henry Voth from

31. *Yearbook: Canadian Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America, 47th Convention* (1957), 86–88.

32. *Yearbook: Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, 59th Convention* (1969), 183–184. Note: By 1968, the Canadian "district" of the General Conference became known as the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches (CCMBC), even though its 1945 incorporated name remained unchanged, the Canadian Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America.

Herbert assumed responsibility for the choir and conducting for the next four years. He continued the tradition of an annual oratorio performance. For three years, the choir performed *Messiah*. In 1958, Victor Martens returned from studies in Germany to teach voice and then gradually accepted additional responsibilities when Voth left in 1959. The president was initially assigned as head of the department.[33]

Interest in music appeared to decline after 1954 with fewer than 20 students enrolled until 1962–1963 when there were 22. By that time, Martens had begun to establish his own reputation as a gifted musician and conductor. During the J. A. Toews era, Martens became well known for his talent and his rigorous pursuit of excellence in classical choral music. In contrast to Horch, however, he was not able to establish good rapport with conference and church leaders. Although the college *A Cappella* choir sang some of the beloved *Kernlieder* of the Mennonite community, Martens's repertoire focused increasingly on the choral works of Bach and other German composers whose works were often not appreciated as much by the constituency. There was too much emphasis on performance and not enough on ministry, they felt. Gradually, the works of popular American composers found their way into Canadian churches and the college was criticized for its focus on classical music.

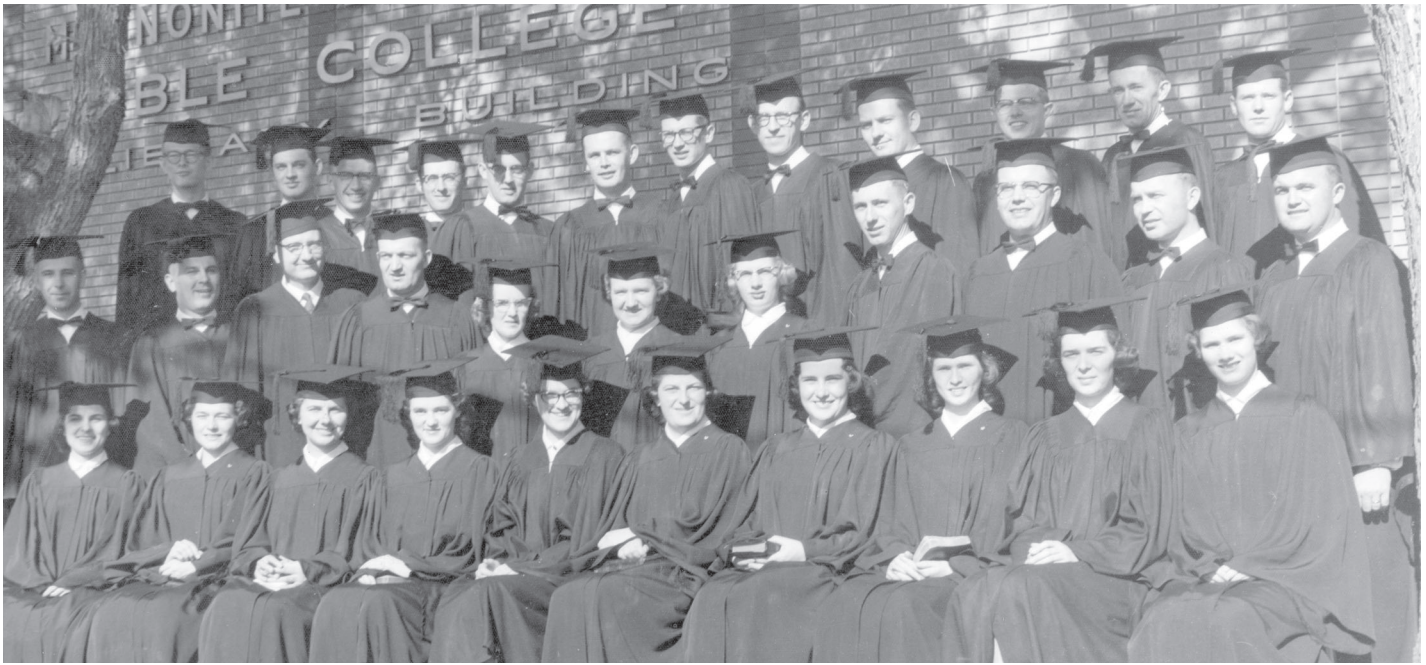
During the years until 1965, Martens conducted the Oratorio choir in various performances, but only once (1960) did he choose *Messiah*. Instead, he chose works such as Bach's *St. John Passion* and *St. Matthew Passion*, Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, and Brahms's *Ein deutsches Requiem*. By and large, these tended to be less popular with the constituency.

Martens continued as head of the music department until 1966 when he was given a two-year leave of absence to pursue further studies in Detmold, Germany. He returned for only one more year (1968–1969). In 1966, William (Bill) Baerg conducted the Oratorio choir for the first time and continued for most of the succeeding years of MBBC, except for several years when he was on study leave or sabbatical.

General trends

Under the administration of J. A. Toews and aided by a strong faculty that included David Ewert (1953–1972) and Frank C. Peters (1957–1965), the college appeared to be in an excellent position to serve the constituency and train new leaders for the future. But there were also troubling signs that were not always easily recognized. An analysis of student demographics showed that the college was not keeping up with

33. Minutes of the Executive Committee, 4 September 1959, Vol. 57, Fld. 3, CMBS, Winnipeg.



MBBC graduating class, 1960. Front row (l-r): Elsie Boese, Lydia Unger, Alice Pauls, Linda Froese, Louise Regehr, Elvira Lenzmann, Agnes Unger, Neoma Hinz, Esther Wiens, and Joyce Redekop. Second row: Herbert Bushkowsky, David Nickel, John H. Froese, John Doerksen, Hedy Dick, Teana Toews, Elfrieda Dueck, Rudie Willms, Benjamin Klassen, John N. Klassen, and Harvey Gossen. Third row: Harold Jantz, John Braun, Elmer Andres, Henry Janzen, Peter Wiebe, Leonard Doerksen, Leonard Neufeldt, Paul Fast, Walter Driedger, Alfred Friesen, Helmut Schroeder, and Leonard Schroeder. (MAID CMBS NP026-30-43)

constituency developments. Enrolments fluctuated between a low of 106 in 1957–1958 to a high of 137 in 1958–1959 during a time when the total number of students in post-high school institutions was increasing rapidly. The relative numbers from various provinces was even more troubling.

The Mennonite Brethren membership in Canada was increasing most dramatically in British Columbia, but student numbers from British Columbia did not show a corresponding increase. In 1958–1959, there were 45 full-time students from British Columbia, which amounted to approximately one-third of the total. In 1962–1963, there were only 26 full-time students from British Columbia, representing about 19% of the total. In the meantime, the Manitoba percentage had increased from about 27% to about 36%. The numbers from other provinces fluctuated considerably with no clear trends.

The average age of students remained relatively constant at around 24, and the number of married students also remained relatively constant at about 25%. Almost all the entering students had completed high school. Whereas during the early years there had usually been a significant number of students from other denominations, the college attracted very few non-Mennonite Brethren students during this period.

Issues pertaining to student life and ethical standards emerged with increasing frequency. Toews was generally quite conservative on these issues.[34] In December 1962, Toews submitted his resignation as president. His main strength, he believed, was in teaching rather than administration. He was willing to continue teaching if the committee so desired.[35] In January, the executive also persuaded F. C. Peters to remain for another year after he had given indications that he was ready to leave.

34. See Toews-Nafziger, *A Man of his Word*, 54.

35. Letter to the College Committee, 10 December 1962, Vol. 57, Fld. 3, CMBS, Winnipeg.

6

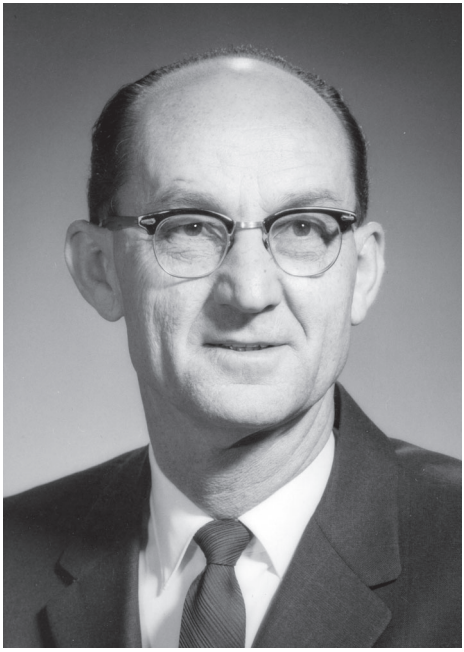
Unsettling Signs: Jacob H. Quiring, 1963–1967

Soon after the resignation of J. A. Toews, the committee appointed Jacob H. Quiring as the new MBBC president. The appointment was a natural one and did not elicit controversy.

Jacob H. Quiring (1913–2008) was the first president who was not a *Russländer* (part of the 1920s migrants from the Soviet Union).[1] He was born in Hepburn of parents who had migrated from the United States early in the 1900s. After attending Dalmeny Bible School for two years, he continued his Bible school studies at Winkler. His first teaching assignment came shortly thereafter at the Coaldale Bible School. The Coaldale Mennonite Brethren were mostly *Russländer*. Jake had experienced some of the tension between the two groups of immigrants in Saskatchewan in his years growing up in the Dalmeny area, but he was well received in Coaldale.

After five years in Coaldale, he was invited to teach in the Dalmeny Bible School where he had studied earlier. However, he was convinced that he needed further education and moved to Hillsboro, Kansas, to complete a BA degree at Tabor College. Then, in 1945, the second year of MBBC's operation, he was invited to join the faculty. In 1949, he earned a BD degree at United College in Winnipeg. He continued on the faculty until 1957 and served as acting president during Janzen's leave in 1951–1952. After leaving the college, he served as pastor at the Winkler Mennonite Brethren Church until 1962. He also chaired the college committee for several years before being invited back as a faculty member in 1962. Years later, in 1970, he was awarded an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree by Wilfrid Laurier University, the year that MBBC's

1. For a biography, see David Ewert, "Jacob H. Quiring (1913–)," in *Honour Such People* (Winnipeg, MB: Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies, 1997), 101–123.



Jacob H. Quiring (MAID CMBS NP026-20-06)

affiliation with the university ended. Overall, Quiring's academic qualifications were not as strong as those of J. A. Toews or of some of his faculty colleagues.

Quiring was very articulate in English and could probably relate better to the younger generation of Canadian Mennonite Brethren. His preaching style established good rapport with his audience and his sermons were laced with good humour. He was well known in the constituency and was easily accepted as the new president. His main teaching areas at the college were psychology and Christian education, subjects that were not very popular among students.

The struggle to secure recognition by various Canadian universities continued during Quiring's administration. Some progress was reported in 1965 when some students transferred successfully to the University of Calgary, but no major success was achieved during his administration.

In the meantime, the role of liberal arts courses in the curriculum continued to create ambiguity and confusion. In January 1964, the committee decided to appoint Harry Loewen as full-time faculty member beginning in 1965 to meet student demands for liberal arts courses. Similarly, the administration was given permission to investigate the possibility of employing a full-time professor in English. Esther Wiens was soon appointed to begin in 1968. The arts enrolment had already increased to 77. The academic dean, F. C. Peters, reported that of 181 students "only six are pure liberal arts and these have had previous Bible school or Bible college training." The minutes further stated, "The entire faculty is agreed to keep this a Bible college. The need for additional general training for leaders in the churches was presented as a major reason for a liberal arts offering. The projected music degree programme would consist of four years instead of three, in which the fourth year

would be theological in nature and be spread over the four years."[2] Plans were underway for music courses to fit into a BA music major. Assurances were given that the emphasis would remain on Bible study and no degree would be granted without the equivalent of one year of Bible/theology.

MBBC Building Committee, 1964. Front row (l-r): John A. Konrad, Cornelius A. DeFehr, Jacob M. Klassen, and Jacob H. Quiring. Second row: Toby Voth, David D. Duerksen, Harry Giesbrecht, and Gerhard Janzen. (MAID CMBS NP026-18-28)

In 1965, similar assurances were given that the objectives of the college remained unchanged. However, in 1966, the president's report seemed to elevate the liberal arts to a new level. His report stated, "The present program calls for the progressive development of a school of liberal arts and theology, both on the undergraduate level and the graduate levels."[3] The minutes detailed the nature and purpose of the three distinct areas—seminary, Bible college, and arts college. These included the following statements:

> *The purpose of the Bible college was to give a biblical grounding to the high school or university student taking off a year or several years before proceeding with his studies.*
>
> *High school students entering a liberal arts program would benefit from studying in a Bible college atmosphere.*

2. College Committee Minutes, 24–25 January 1964, Vol. 57, Fld. 4, CMBS, Winnipeg.

3. College report to the College Committee, 21–22 January 1966, Vol. 57, Fld. 4, CMBS, Winnipeg.

The Christian perspective in the arts is tremendously important.
We ought to look at the trend realistically. We ought to be trail blazers and adapt the Bible college program to changing needs.
The building up of the first two years of the arts program would strengthen the appeal to the high school graduates—a group which ought to be solicited in view of the needs and the problems of today.

The minutes also reflected the fear of some committee members that the strengthening of the arts program would weaken the Bible college emphasis. A handwritten table attached to the minutes was entitled "The Mennonite Brethren College." It had three columns: "College of Arts," "College of Bible," and "College of Divinity." The "College of Arts" program envisioned two full years with the final year at Waterloo. It also envisioned a full BA with a music major. The Bible college program envisioned a three-year BRE and a three-year BTh plus one year of liberal arts. The sacred music course would no longer be offered as part of the "College of Bible."[4]

Henry W. Redekopp (left) and Joe Hiebert turn the sod on 5 May 1964 to initiate two MBBC building projects, a new student dormitory (Riverton Hall) and a library addition (A. H. Unruh Memorial Building). Looking on are (l-r) Gerhard Janzen, Harry Giesbrecht, Toby Voth, A. A. Kroeker, Henry H. Voth, John A. Konrad, Cornelius A. DeFehr, Frank C. Peters, John A. Toews, Jacob J. Toews, Jacob H. Quiring, Victor Adrian, and Peter Klassen. (MAID CMBS NP026-13-09)

The college regularly reported arts enrolment, although there was some lack of clarity in the reports. In 1963–1964, it reported a total

4. College Committee Minutes, 21 January 1966, Vol. 57, Fld. 4, CMBS, Winnipeg.

of 62 enrolments in university courses, with 48 students taking four or more courses. In 1965, it reported 35 enrolled in "pure arts" (excluding religious courses, philosophy, and Greek, which were also accredited), and, in 1966–1967, it reported that 66 students were enrolled in arts courses. Clearly, arts courses were a very significant part of the college program, even though conference support was divided.

MBBC student dormitory, Riverton Hall, completed in 1964. (MAID CMBS NP026-01-13)

The music program generated relatively little discussion during this period. Victor Martens, who began his services as voice instructor in 1957, became a regular faculty member several years later. He was appreciated by music students but was not as well known in the constituency. In 1964, he notified the committee that he wished to resign. The committee began the search for a replacement. But Martens was persuaded to continue until 1966 and then take a two-year leave of absence.[5] Bill Baerg was invited to replace Martens during his absence.

Amid the discussions of the college program, there were also occasional references to dropping the dual name and adopting the neutral name, "Mennonite Brethren College." In January 1966, the committee decided to recommend the change to the conference, but, in April, it postponed action and the issue did not return to the agenda.

The BD program, which was begun in 1962, did not grow as the committee and faculty had hoped. A total of eight or nine students enrolled in each year from 1963–1966, but that number declined in

5. Ibid.

succeeding years. In January 1964, the committee urged the Committee of Reference and Counsel of the General Conference to open negotiations to unify higher theological education in North America.[6] Two years later, the president reported that the Americans were moving aggressively to develop their seminary program. The prospect for a joint effort appeared to be fading, which left the Canadians with two other alternatives: 1) discontinue the MBBC seminary program and encourage Canadian students to enroll in the seminary in Fresno; or 2) develop a full seminary program in Canada at MBBC.[7]

Completed in 1965, the A. H. Unruh Memorial building provided additional library space, classrooms, and offices. (MAID CMBS NP 026-01-76)

The college obviously preferred the second alternative. This would require a stronger faculty, the president reported. The committee agreed to strengthen the program but cautioned against closing the doors for a cooperative program with the USA permanently.

By 1966, it became clear that there were serious internal problems at MBBC. On 22 February, President Quiring submitted his resignation to the executive of the committee. This was about a month after the full committee meetings in January, which caused some questions about the timing of his submission.[8] Quiring indicated that his resignation was partly prompted by his sense that he did not have adequate academic

6. College Committee Minutes, 24–25 January 1964, Vol. 57, Fld. 4, CMBS, Winnipeg.

7. Report to the College Committee, 21–22 January 1966, Vol. 57, Fld. 4, CMBS, Winnipeg.

8. See letter by D. D. Duerksen to members of the College Committee, 1 March 1966. This letter details some of the developments from 22 February to 24 February, Vol. 57, Fld. 4, CMBS, Winnipeg.

training for his duties, particularly in terms of representing the college to the university community. This feeling of inadequacy and insecurity appeared also to relate to his relationship to faculty members. But the problem went deeper and was partly triggered by the appointment of a registrar. Quiring had favoured Harry Loewen, who declined the appointment. Victor Adrian was then nominated by the faculty administration and approved by the faculty. Quiring evidently did not support the nomination. He admitted that this was "a cause" for his resignation. The result was considerable tension in the faculty. The faculty agreed that Quiring's resignation should be accepted and that a new president should be appointed from outside faculty ranks.

George Wiebe (CMBC) conducts the MBBC/CMBC joint Oratorio Choir at the Winnipeg Civic Auditorium, 1965. They performed Bach's* Christmas Oratorio *with soloists David Falk, Viola Falk, Ingrid Sawatzky, and Victor Martens. (MAID CMBS NP026-09-84)

Quiring's final report at the convention in July 1966 did not refer to the reasons for his resignation. But his departure was sudden, unexpected, and revealed that all was not well. Delegates at the convention expressed concern about the eschatological emphasis at the college (i.e., the repudiation of dispensationalism) and the "apparent lack of pastors coming to our churches or mission workers to the mission program." The college response was that 10 of 28 graduates of the present year were beginning work in ministries such as the pastorate, Bible school teaching, and missions.[9]

9. Convention report, *Mennonite Brethren Herald* (22 July 1966), 5.

An interim committee

A series of eight executive meetings were held from 3 March to 6 April to deal with a crisis involving fractured relationships. Various alternatives for leadership of the college were discussed, including the appointment of an interim committee. Other options were the appointment of either J. A. Toews or Victor Adrian.[10] The full committee met on 28–29 April and accepted the executive's recommendation to appoint an interim administrative committee chaired by David Ewert. The two other members were J. A. Toews and Henry H. Voth. Voth had joined the faculty in 1964.

Retention and recruitment of faculty was the committee's priority for the future if the college was to continue its program and strengthen certain areas including theology and arts. The recent loss of F. C. Peters was felt most strongly. There were resignations and requests for sabbaticals or leaves from regular faculty, including Toews, Adrian, and Ewert. By summer 1966, several appointments were in place, including Bill Baerg (regular music faculty), Herb Swartz, Vern Ratzlaff, and Abe Dueck (visiting lecturers in various areas). Others were projected for the future, including Allen Guenther (beginning 1967), John Regehr (1968), and Esther Wiens (1968). In December, the chair of the board, Henry Redekopp, reported that F. C. Peters was not open to returning to the faculty. Dean Ewert presented a plan to invite prominent individuals as visiting lecturers for 1967–1968. Each would give 30 hours of lectures in two weeks and together these would fulfill various credit requirements.[11] Eventually, the board appointed Herb Swartz to the regular faculty and continued the appointments of Vern Ratzlaff and Abe Dueck as visiting lecturers. Orlando Wiebe and Gerhard W. Peters were appointed as guest lecturers.

Despite the significant efforts by the board[12] and faculty to promote the college and recruit students, the difficult circumstances and challenges had a serious negative impact. The overall enrolment declined from 161 in 1963–1964 to 139 in 1966–1967 and a further major decline to 104 in 1967–1968. Equally problematic was the relatively fewer students from the western provinces. The enrolment from British Columbia declined

10. Minutes or Descriptions of Meetings of Executive during the Months of March and April, sent to College Committee, 17 April 1966, Vol. 57, Fld. 4, CMBS, Winnipeg.

11. See Dean's report to the Executive and Administrative Committees, 7 December 1966, Vol. 57, Fld. 5, CMBS, Winnipeg.

12. A new Board of Higher Education was created in July 1966, and a complete restructuring of the Canadian conference was completed by 1970. One of the mandates of the new board included inter-college relations.

from 43 in 1963 to 20 in 1967 during a time when that province was recording the largest growth in Mennonite Brethren membership. Only four students enrolled from each of Alberta and Saskatchewan in 1967–1968. Only Manitoba retained a relatively better enrolment, although it also declined significantly.

7

Back to Basics: Victor Adrian, 1967–1972

The appointment of a new MBBC president was the most critical task confronting the newly created board in 1966. F. C. Peters was the first to be contacted and discussions carried on for several months. It was December 7 before the executive heard definitively that Peters was not available. Several other individuals from outside faculty ranks had been on the list but were not available. Two candidates from within the faculty were also considered. Some favoured David Ewert, who had joined the faculty in 1953 and had served the college both as registrar and academic dean for periods of time. As a biblical scholar, he was the undisputed leader. However, there were some leaders in the constituency who had strong reservations about him, particularly concerning his teaching on eschatology and his strong opposition to dispensationalism. The other front runner was Victor Adrian (1927–), who was on sabbatical at Concordia Theological Seminary in the second term (1966–1967). He was completing work on his ThD degree.

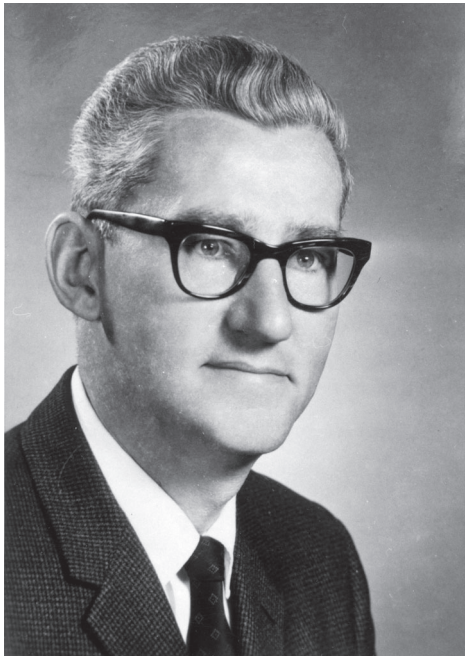
When the full board convened in January, it met with Victor Adrian to discuss the nature of his potential appointment. On 27 January, the board formally appointed Adrian as the new president.[1] The faculty was encouraged to maintain the Bible college as the core of the institution, to continue offering liberal arts, and to strengthen the BD program. David Ewert was appointed academic dean.

J. A. Toews soon submitted his resignation from the faculty. Although there may have been various reasons for his resignation, the appointment of Adrian was certainly a factor. His daughter Elfrieda wrote,

> *Certainly, the tensions among faculty members intensified his determination to leave. When Victor Adrian was chosen as president-elect in January 1967, he*

1. Minutes, Board of Higher Education, 27 January 1967, Vol. 57, Fld. 5, CMBS, Winnipeg.

knew he would feel better leaving. John was particularly concerned about the direction the school might take under Adrian's direction. In a letter to J. H. Quiring, he wrote, "If the college is to be a training school for the ministry in our churches, then we need more men on the staff who have pastoral experience and who are deeply rooted in our church and conference life." [2]



Victor Adrian (MAID CMBS NP026-02-95)

As would soon become clearer, Adrian did not share Toews's strong commitment to the Anabaptist vision and showed less interest in connecting with the wider Mennonite world. He was more in tune with mainstream American evangelicalism.

Adrian's vision

The decision to appoint Victor Adrian as the president-elect came as a surprise to many. Adrian had joined the faculty in 1962. He was a graduate (MTh) of Westminster Theological Seminary, which was a conservative Presbyterian (Calvinist) seminary. At the time of his appointment, he was completing his ThD at Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Indiana. The seminary belonged to the Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod. Adrian's dissertation dealt with Jacob Spener, the Pietist leader who wrote *Pia Disideria*. Adrian had previously been principal at the Mennonite Brethren Collegiate Institute in Winnipeg and had a reputation as an engaging teacher who also had potential to relate well to the constituency.

In terms of theology, Adrian subscribed to the Mennonite Brethren confession of faith, including the position of nonresistance. However, he had already come under some criticism for his open declaration that the state had the right to carry the sword and that Christians should not try to

2. Toews-Nafziger, *A Man of His Word*, 112–115.

impose Christian ethics on the state.[3] Adrian wrote several articles during his tenure on the faculty of MBBC that dealt with issues concerning Anabaptism and its relationship to evangelicalism. These indicated that he identified himself more as an evangelical than as an Anabaptist. In 1965, the *Mennonite Brethren Herald* published an insert entitled "Born of Anabaptism and Pietism."[4] In the insert, Adrian traced the origins of the Mennonite Brethren Church, rejecting the interpretations that considered the two movements to be incompatible. Pietism was not popular among the main interpreters of Anabaptism at the time. Adrian identified three general characteristics of the Mennonite Brethren Church: 1) Progressivism, 2) Experiential Faith, and 3) Evangelism and Missions. Five years later, as president of MBBC, Adrian published an article in *The Voice*, the official publication of the college. Here, Adrian again sought to articulate his position on what appeared to be his major concern—to reinforce Mennonite Brethren identity as evangelical.[5] He was critical of those who defined the peace position as the heart of Anabaptism.

There were those on the faculty as well as those in the constituency who were disappointed in the appointment of Adrian as president. Some regarded the appointment as a move away from Anabaptism and away from the emphasis that had characterized the college in previous years, especially during the administration of J. A. Toews. Others were disappointed that David Ewert was not selected because they regarded him as the most respected teacher and academic administrator that the college had ever had. A fairly strong friendship had developed between Ewert and Adrian during their brief time as colleagues. Now, the selection of Adrian could be interpreted as a rebuff to Ewert. As it turned out, the relationship was put under severe stress in subsequent years.

Adrian's inaugural address to the Canadian Mennonite Brethren conference meeting in Coaldale in July 1967 was perhaps the clearest vision statement that had been delivered for MBBC until that time.[6] Adrian forthrightly articulated what he believed to be the primary task of the college, which was to prepare men and women for church-related ministries. He appealed to the constituency to stand firm and endorse this essential purpose of the college. The statement was generally in keeping

3. See "More than 400 attend youth meeting," *Canadian Mennonite* (15 November 1966), 1; and letter from Victor Dirks to Victor Adrian, 26 November 1966, Personal Correspondence with the Board of Higher Education, 1967–1968, Vol. 69, Fld. 37, CMBS, Winnipeg.

4. *Mennonite Brethren Herald* (26 March 1965).

5. "Anabaptist or Evangelical," *The Voice* 19, no. 4 (October 1970): 1–4.

6. "The Mennonite Brethren Bible College and the Evangelical Mission of the Church," *Yearbook: Canadian Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America, 57th Convention* (1967), 66–69.

with the vision of those who had established the college in 1944. But it was also an indication that, in his view, the vision had become blurred and that a new emphasis on priorities was required.

Adrian then paid tribute to what he called the "secondary" task of the college. This task was to "help Christian laymen become effective witnesses in their various professions, training them to make contributions to the work of the church. Christian laymen need well-grounded Christian convictions"; they need to be immersed in theology and in the study of the Bible.

After stating what he considered to be the primary and secondary tasks of the college, Adrian addressed what was becoming an increasingly thorny question: the role of the Arts department. He identified two main purposes of the arts curriculum: 1) to inform those who entered church-related ministries about the world in which they lived—the ideas, literature, history, and manner of life of humanity; and 2) to help Christian laymen to become better witnesses. Therefore, the arts courses should be related to Christian suppositions; arts students should take theological courses, and arts students should be challenged to enter full-time ministry.

Adrian also addressed another thorny question: the role of the music program. He began by stating what many in the constituency felt—that the music program had emphasized performance and technical training too much in the past. He insisted that this must change and that there would have to be an increasing emphasis on the needs of the churches. Christian hymnody should be at the forefront of the music curriculum. The music faculty, he affirmed, had already been involved in consultations and was committed to this change.

In summary, Adrian stated that the faculty was making a conscious effort to move toward its primary task. He again invited the constituency to indicate their support for this initiative and to express any concerns.

A lengthy discussion followed on the floor of the convention. Although the details of the discussions were not recorded, the general tone appeared to be supportive and the delegates apparently did not perceive the presentation as one that charted a radical change from the past. There was also support for a strengthening of the BD program and for further discussion with the American constituency about cooperation with them.

Adrian's inaugural address was frequently referenced in subsequent years and became the first step in a process that led to a crisis concerning the direction of the college. But for the time being, it appeared that

Adrian had the confidence of most of the constituency. Despite Adrian's reference to solidarity among faculty members, however, later developments suggest that there was already considerable unease among some members of the faculty about the direction of the college under Adrian's administration.

Harry Loewen was one of those who sensed that the college was moving in a direction that he could not support. Loewen was appointed to the faculty to teach German and history on the recommendation of David Ewert in 1965. In reflecting on his experience, Loewen wrote,

> *Ever since I came to teach at MBBC, I had said that I would stay at the college as long as I had the freedom to teach my disciplines . . .with integrity and according to the accepted academic methods and standards of those disciplines. A Christian academic, I believed, can and must pursue the truth wherever it might lead and no one, not even theologians or clergymen, must be allowed to curb or direct that search for truth. Now that I felt my freedom and quest were either suspected or limited, I could not continue without denying what I was as a person and what I believed to be true.*[7]

In a lengthy letter to the board, Loewen wrote,

> *My greatest disappointment and even disillusionment came in connection with some men whom I had previously respected, admired, and loved. Some of them had been my teachers in Bible school. When I was called to the college, I considered it a privilege to work with our top men in an institution that could be leading in our conference. But I soon found that it was possible to be an excellent teacher and minister behind the pulpit, and yet be part of a miserable break down in inter-personal relations.*[8]

Loewen resigned in 1968. His statement references one of the many underlying tensions that the faculty struggled with in subsequent decades. Academic freedom, which was one of the main tenets of public universities, would often clash with the worldviews and expectations of denominational schools.

During the four years of Adrian's administration, a number of difficult issues arose that together brought about the most serious crisis that MBBC had experienced until that time. In December of his first year as president, Adrian addressed the seminary question in an article in the *Herald*.[9] He pointed out how MBBC had provided the churches

7. Harry Loewen, *Between Worlds: Reflections of a Soviet-born Canadian Mennonite* (Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 2006), 208.

8. Letter from Harry Loewen to the Board of Higher Education, 12 March 1968, Personal Correspondence with the Board of Higher Education, 1967–1968, Vol. 69, Fld. 37, CMBS, Winnipeg.

9. Victor Adrian, "Is One Seminary the Answer?" *Mennonite Brethren Herald* (22 December

with many pastors, ministers, teachers, missionaries, and active Christian laymen in its 23 years. Seventy graduates of the previous six years were engaged in full-time Christian service. The delegates at the July convention had endorsed the strengthening of the theological program to continue to fulfill MBBC's original mandate, he stated. The college was not to become a liberal arts institution. The movement from the BTh to the BD level for individuals interested in church-related ministries would continue, but the constituency was too small to support a separate institution to fulfill that need. Rather, he argued, the best alternative was to provide a combined institution for those who wished to train for full-time ministries and those interested in a theological orientation for lay ministries. He pointed out that the American pattern of liberal arts colleges and a seminary had not been successful in meeting the needs of the church. The best pattern was one consisting of three levels of institutions: Bible institute, Bible college, and seminary.

Adrian then asked whether the best option would be a joint seminary with the US. His own view was that a seminary based in either the US or Canada would not serve the needs of both countries. The best option, he believed, was to have a strong level of cooperation between two theological institutions, one in Fresno and the other in Winnipeg. The cooperation could include an exchange of students and faculty.

Finally, Adrian commented on how the conference should proceed towards harmony in seeking a solution to its Christian educational objective. He stated, "Not by the maneuvering of small committees of a few men, but by open, free, loving, brotherly exchange and discussion, until we see more clearly together the direction the Holy Spirit would want us to go."[10]

Adrian moved quickly to address issues that he considered important to put the college on the road to recovery. One was to strengthen the faculty at MBBC. Esther Wiens had agreed to join the faculty in the fall of 1968 to teach English and to become the dean of women. Contacts were made with Henry Krahn and Archie Penner to join the faculty but neither accepted. Penner was from the Evangelical Mennonite Conference (EMC) and the board was anxious to work more cooperatively with them.[11]

Adrian also sought to secure relationships with the Bible institutes. He met with Winkler, Hepburn (Bethany), and Abbotsford (Mennonite

1967), 4–5.

10. Ibid., 5.

11. Minutes of the College sub-committee meeting, 8 August 1967, Vol. 57, Fld. 5, CMBS, Winnipeg.

Brethren Bible Institute) schools to enhance cooperation. In March 1968, representatives of each of the schools met in Hepburn and prepared a basic agreement to integrate programs in such a way that students could complete several degrees including a BA in five or six years.[12] The detailed plan that was accepted in July proved to be difficult to implement. In July 1968, Adrian reported that Steinbach Bible School had accepted an integration proposal and that plans were underway to appoint an EMC representative to the MBBC committee.[13]

The decline in student enrolment during Adrian's first year continued in subsequent years. Particularly notable was the decline from the three western provinces. From 1963 to 1967, the enrolment from British Columbia declined from 43 to 20. Only four (full-time?) students enrolled from each of Alberta and Saskatchewan.

In July 1968, the board decided to appoint a committee to "make an intensive study of our Christian educational system."[14] A series of five articles by MBBC faculty appeared in the *Herald* from 12 July to 6 September under the general heading, *Toward a Philosophy of Christian Education*. These addressed a range of topics. The first in the series was by Vern Ratzlaff and sought to define the nature of a Christian college.[15] His analysis assumed a broader framework than that which had characterized MBBC in the past. It did not focus on the preparation of young people for ministry, which was Adrian's main concern.

Herb Swartz specifically addressed the issue of combining liberal arts with theology.[16] He argued that while the public university was often seen as fact-oriented and neutral, it was actually eclectic in its philosophies of life and religious positions. It is not "presuppositionless" or "objective." "The convictions of the teachers and the defined body of assumptions regarding basic positions will permeate any university system,"[17] he argued. The key for Swartz, therefore, was the nature of the relationship between theology and liberal arts. According to Swartz, "The combining of liberal arts with theological studies is finally to result in an integration of knowledge and action, in which both the relation of

12. See "Bible College and Bible Institutes enter upon Closer Relationships," *Mennonite Brethren Herald* (5 April 1968), 10.

13. See President's report to the Board, 5–6 July 1968, Vol. 57, Fld. 5, CMBS, Winnipeg.

14. Minutes, Board of Higher Education, 5 July 1968, Vol. 57, Fld. 5, CMBS, Winnipeg.

15. Vernon Ratzlaff, "What makes a Christian College Christian?" *Mennonite Brethren Herald* (12 July 1968), 7–8.

16. Herbert Swartz, "Why Combine Liberal Arts and Theological Studies," *Mennonite Brethren Herald* (26 July 1968), 13.

17. Swartz cited Waldemar Janzen, *A Basic Educational Philosophy* (Winnipeg, MB: Canadian Mennonite Bible College, 1966), 6–7.

the parts to the whole and the meaning or purpose of the parts and the whole are so related that the man of God is 'fitted' to live."[18]

MBBC Student Council, 1968–1969. Front row (l-r): Margaret Wiebe, James Nikkel, and Bert Friesen. Middle row: Arnie Neufeld, Walter Rempel, Susan Wiebe, John Bender, and Hartmut Wiens. Back row: Robert LePage, John Thiessen, and David Hamm. (MAID CMBS NP026-35-16)

In general, these articles by MBBC faculty used a conceptual framework that was significantly different from that which Adrian had used in his inaugural address. Adrian referred to the arts as informing students about the world and enabling them to become better witnesses. Swartz referred to the arts as dealing "with the central powers and the core studies of human knowing" and as a "prerequisite of all human learning." The concept of the integration of all knowledge became increasingly important in later discussions about the purpose of the college. The differences between these approaches were not always apparent to those who were engaged in the dialogue or to the constituency.

It is interesting to note the significantly different statements of objectives between the Bible College catalogue and the College of Arts catalogue. The Bible college statement included five specific objectives related to the preparation of ministers, teachers, missionaries, choir leaders, and other ministries.[19] The College of Arts statement was a brief paragraph that focused on the purpose to "provide opportunities to

18. Swartz, "Why Combine Liberal Arts and Theological Studies," 13.
19. *MBBC Catalogue*, 1968–1969, 12, Vol. 117, Fld. 3, CMBS, Winnipeg.

secure a broad and liberal education in an atmosphere that acknowledges Jesus Christ as Lord."[20]

During the 1968–1969 academic year, Academic Dean David Ewert was in Montreal completing the work for his PhD degree. Adrian carried on a vigorous correspondence with many, both inside and outside the Mennonite Brethren constituency. He addressed such issues as reinforcing the missions and evangelism thrust of the college program, the relationship to Bible schools, the future of seminary training, and the role of music at the college. Much of the correspondence reflected a deep realization that the college was entering a period of great uncertainty. Adrian's cordial correspondence with David Ewert addressed most of these issues as well as the search for qualified faculty for the college.

A changing social and cultural environment

During the 1960s, the Mennonite Brethren constituency experienced rapid changes, many of which had a profound impact on MBBC. Mennonite Brethren were moving to the cities in increasing numbers, and more were attending secular universities and professional schools. Television had become commonplace in homes, and theater attendance was becoming popular among young people. Total abstinence from alcohol could no longer be assumed. Sexual and dating attitudes and practices were changing. Overall, the social and cultural climate was changing radically as Mennonite Brethren became more and more assimilated into society.

In the first two decades of MBBC, many of the students were "mature" students who came to college after marriage or after spending some time in a vocation such as farming, teaching, or nursing. Most were still able to converse in German and some had come to Canada as young children in the 1920s or had arrived as refugees after World War II. By the mid-1960s, this profile was changing rapidly; many were 17- or 18-year-olds who enrolled directly after graduating from high school, although some still transferred from Bible schools or enrolled after being engaged in a work place for a time. Sometimes these students made a very deliberate choice between attending a Bible school or attending MBBC. The reasons were partly because of the higher academic profile of the college but also because they perceived the college as a place of escape and of greater social freedom. The college was increasingly criticized for a relaxed discipline and also for greater academic and theological freedom and tolerance. The college was situated in the centre of an urban environment, one that resulted in exposure to temptations and

20. *Mennonite Brethren College of Arts Catalogue*, 1968–1969, 6, Vol. 117, Fld. 3, CMBS, Winnipeg.

practices that were not faced to the same degree by Bible schools. The Bible schools were all situated in predominantly rural areas some distance from large urban centres.

Celebrating 25 years, 1944–1969

In 1969, the college celebrated its 25th anniversary. The Canadian conference convened in Winnipeg from 5–8 July. An anniversary program was held the first evening. Bill Baerg conducted a special choir; Herb Swartz gave a report on the 550 graduates of MBBC; and a special panel met to discuss the topic, "Can MBBC Meet the Challenge of Today?" The panel featured six individuals: J. A. Toews, John Redekop, David Ewert, Jack Block, Harold Jantz, and Victor Adrian.[21] The former president, J. A. Toews, commented that "the inadequacy of liberal arts choices and the inability of college students to gain credits elsewhere" had led to the decline in enrolment. The board chair, Jack Block, "questioned the credibility of the college's claim to be preparing Christian workers and urged instead that more attention be given to strengthening the faith of seeking young people." Such comments from leaders demonstrated that not everyone supported Adrian's view concerning the direction that the college should take. A modest anniversary booklet was published that included a directory of past presidents and faculty as well as an analysis of graduates of the previous 25 years.[22]

Publications

Since 1952, *The Voice* had served as a publication of the college faculty intended primarily for those engaged in various ministries in the church. In the anniversary year of 1969, however, the college decided to broaden its scope. Victor Adrian, as editor, wrote that while the faculty would continue to be the main contributors, the journal would also invite contributions "by competent men who are active Christians in various professions in our society." The focus of these articles would be on contemporary issues.

The first guest article was by Dr. Abe B. Voth and was entitled "Medicine and the Total Man." Later articles focused on student unrest and the church in the urban-secular city.[23] A projected article would be entitled "Voices in the Wilderness" and was planned to point out the

21. "59th Convention of the Mennonite Brethren Churches in Canada," *Mennonite Brethren Herald* (25 July 1969), 4–6.

22. *Twenty-fifth Anniversary Publication of Mennonite Brethren Bible College, 1944–1969* (Winnipeg, MB: Mennonite Brethren Bible College, 1969).

23. Victor Adrian, "Editorial Comments," *The Voice* 18, no. 1 (June 1969): 1–2.

need for Christians to understand the mood and thought of modern man. Adrian continued,

> *Generally, modern fiction urges a new concept of men upon its readers. From the self-sufficient, generally good and progressive men of the past generation there has been a swing to the modern man—disillusioned, despairing, aimless, and inherently evil, inhabiting a hostile universe. While many of the voices are able to analyze man's dilemma, there is the urgent need to restore the lost vision of man as a creature of God made to know God and to relate to him.*[24]

Adrian was very interested in engaging with others on many issues and he also demonstrated this in his teaching. His classes were popular among students and he always sought to engage in dialogue with fellow faculty members on important issues.

Only three years later, in 1972, *The Voice* was replaced by *Direction*, which was a merger of *The Voice* and *The Journal*. *The Journal* was a publication of three US Mennonite Brethren institutions—Tabor College, Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary, and Pacific College. The new journal shifted the focus. It sought to combine theology, the arts, and the sciences in order to serve the needs of a broad spectrum of church and society. The editorial stated,

> *This magazine is not for everyone. It is not always appropriate to invite the weak in the faith to doubtful disputations. . . . The sponsoring schools offer this journal to those laymen and ministers who are willing to listen to each other and to think prayerfully together on the sort of questions described in the article which follows.*[25]

The referenced article was written by Delbert Wiens, the first editor of *Direction*, and was entitled "The Questions We Face." Two of the three contributors of the first issue were MBBC faculty. In general, however, the new journal ceased to function as a defining voice of MBBC.

Relationship with Bible institutes

While the college admitted more and younger students directly from high school, the Bible schools were also changing. Although formal entrance requirements to Bible school still allowed students without a high school diploma to enroll, in practice, an increasing number of students were high school graduates. The Bible schools gradually improved their academic standards. More of their faculty had graduate degrees. In time, most of the Bible schools changed their name to "college," reflecting their desire to be perceived as qualified academic institutions. Some also sought

24. Ibid.

25. Delbert Wiens, "Editorial," *Direction* 1, no. 1 (January 1972): 1.

formal accreditation with bodies such as the American Association of Bible Colleges.

Students in the MBBC library, 1966 (MAID CMBS NP026-29-19)

Although from the very beginning there had been a sense that there was some friction between those who were committed to Bible schools and those who supported a more advanced theological school, MBBC increasingly felt competition with the Bible schools in the 1960s. Parents of young people often regarded the Bible schools as a safer place to send their children, and there was the added benefit that these schools were usually closer to home and less expensive to attend. The Board of Higher Education established an "inter-school relations committee" to deal with many of the issues that surfaced. The college administration, and the president in particular, worked hard to establish a clear and separate identity for the two levels of schools and to create a smooth flow of students from one level to another without jeopardizing the direct entry of high school graduates to the college.

On 2 March 1968, representatives of the Bible schools and the college met in Hepburn to discuss issues concerning their relationship. In July, the college presented an agreement concerning an integrated program whereby students would receive credits toward a degree program at the college. The preamble stated,

> *The agreement presupposes a mutual concern to promote Evangelical Christian Training for the needs of a dynamic Church. It presupposes a common interest*

> *in encouraging students to be open to God's call and to church-related ministries and to seek adequate training for such ministries. Underlining the integrated program is the thought that the faculties of both institutions are banding together in commitment to Jesus Christ and His work, and in trust and love one to another, in the common interest to help the church fulfill its manifold evangelical ministry in today's world.*[26]

In the same year, the Evangelical Mennonite Conference began a cooperative venture by appointing a member to the Board of Higher Education. A credit arrangement with the Steinbach Bible Institute was concluded at about the same time. But despite these formal arrangements, implementation of an easy transition from the Bible schools to the college remained elusive.

At the convention in Winnipeg in July 1969, Adrian continued his pattern of presenting strong statements concerning his view about how the college fit into the larger context of educational institutions.[27] He argued that the Bible schools and the seminary did not put a squeeze on the Bible college program. Although two years of arts studies were important in shaping a student's *Weltanschauung*, it was not good for the student to take all his subjects in a small denominational college, he stated. Bible schools were concerned with the study of biblical subjects and church-related areas, but this was not adequate. The integrated program with the college served to enhance their studies. The post-graduate, or seminary program, Adrian argued, was in keeping with the original primary goal of the college, which was geared to training men and women for church-related ministries. Therefore, the college was "not to be exclusively an arts college."[28]

After outlining several specific objectives of the graduate theology program, Adrian listed ten specific points of gratitude. Included were gratitude for unity within the faculty, development of "clarity with regard to our task and goals at college," wholesome student attitudes, improved relations with Bible institutes, and improved relations with the university community. Within less than a year, serious doubt about the accuracy of some of these issues became obvious.

Adrian did conclude by listing several concerns. The first of these was the decline in student enrolment since 1963. Possible reasons included the growth of Bible institutes, change in faculty, and a lessening interest in theology. He appealed to the constituency to help remedy

26. Attachment to Board of Higher Education Minutes, July 1968, Vol. 57, Fld. 5, CMBS, Winnipeg.

27. *Yearbook: Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, 59th Convention* (1969), 61–67.

28. Ibid., 63.

the situation. For the future, he envisioned an expanded student body, cooperation with other evangelicals, and improving cooperation with the Fresno seminary. He also expressed the need to restructure the college committee, which was a local sub-committee of the board that met periodically between board meetings. Although it had two out-of-province members, they seldom attended the meetings, and, therefore, the impression was that "Winnipeg or Manitoba runs the Bible college."[29]

Regionalization

In the last statement of his 1969 report, Adrian formally acknowledged, for the first time, that regional loyalties were having an impact on the college. Relative student enrolments revealed that support was declining from provinces outside Manitoba. Criticism expressed in the press and at conventions was usually strongest from British Columbia and other areas outside Manitoba. Sometimes the criticism focused on the program, sometimes on faculty and their theological points of view, and sometimes on student lifestyle issues.

There were also concerns about the costs of operating the college, particularly by British Columbia, because the so-called levy system meant that close to half of the subsidized cost was borne by the province that had almost 50 percent of the membership but had a much smaller percentage of the students. Within each of the provinces there were also significant differences in the attitude of individual churches. Most were evolving more and more independently, and, in some congregations, the pastors largely determined the attitude toward the college. Many congregations were expanding their local budgets and resented giving large sums to the national conference budget, much of which went to the college.

Commitments to provincial programs and institutions were also growing. Within Manitoba, there was continuing tension between those who wished to support the Winkler Bible Institute and those who were more interested in supporting the college.

Joint seminary

In summer 1968, a resolution recommending that plans be initiated to establish a joint US/Canadian seminary in the Vancouver area was accepted by the Canadian conference in Clearbrook but was rejected the following year. At the US convention in August 1968, the delegates, while favouring

29. Ibid., 67.

a joint seminary, were not ready to accept the Vancouver location.[30] At the college board meetings in Calgary in January 1969, Adrian warned against establishing a joint seminary. He presented a lengthy brief to the commission regarding a separate seminary for Canada.[31] Negotiations continued for the next several years, and, in 1971, the delegates decided to phase out the program at MBBC. In 1973, the delegates accepted a proposal to establish a joint seminary with the US. Although Vancouver was considered an option, the cost of acquiring new facilities, as well as the unlikelihood that Americans could be attracted to Canada, worked against that option. In 1975, the complicated negotiations finally resulted in the decision to accept the seminary in Fresno, California, as a joint seminary of the General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches.[32]

Association with the University of Winnipeg

By 1969, the college was approaching ten successful years of affiliation with Waterloo Lutheran University. However, the Ontario university was itself experiencing significant changes that threatened to impact MBBC negatively. In January 1969, Dean Ewert reported than WLU was likely to become a provincial university and that this could mark the end of the affiliation agreement with MBBC. Therefore, he advised that MBBC begin to explore the possibility of affiliation with an in-province university—the University of Winnipeg. The University of Winnipeg had itself recently changed from a denominational school (United College, related to the United Church) to a provincial university. The board recommended that the college investigate this option.

Negotiations with the University of Winnipeg progressed rather rapidly, and, in 1970, a new agreement was achieved whereby MBBC became associated with the University of Winnipeg. The term "association" was adopted because it indicated a loose relationship that did not imply MBBC would be eligible for provincial grants.

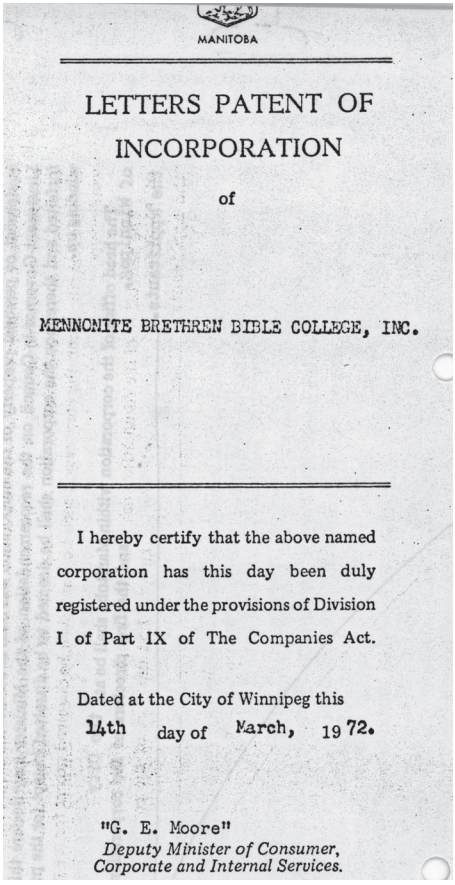
The board also took steps to obtain a provincial charter in place of operating under the federal charter of the Canadian conference. Walter Kehler, a lawyer acting on behalf of the college, indicated that the incorporation of the college as a separate entity was required by

30. See detailed report, "Joint Seminary—a thorny issue at US Conference," *Mennonite Brethren Herald* (20 September 1968), 14.

31. See "Interim Brief to the Commission appointed by the MB Conference to Study the Question of a Separate Seminary Institution for Canada," appended to Minutes of the Board of Higher Education, 17 January 1969, Vol. 57, Fld. 5, CMBS, Winnipeg.

32. *Yearbook: Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, 64th Convention* (1975), 28.

the University's Establishment Act.[33] A formal application was soon submitted, and, in March 1972, Adrian reported that the college was successfully incorporated under the Company's Act.[34]



MANITOBA

LETTERS PATENT OF INCORPORATION

of

MENNONITE BRETHREN BIBLE COLLEGE, INC.

I hereby certify that the above named corporation has this day been duly registered under the provisions of Division I of Part IX of The Companies Act.

Dated at the City of Winnipeg this 14th day of March, 1972.

"G. E. Moore"
Deputy Minister of Consumer, Corporate and Internal Services.

Incorporation charter of the Mennonite Brethren Bible College, 1972
(Vol 60., Fld. 17, CMBS, Winnipeg)

Music program

The music program at the college came under increasing scrutiny during the years of Adrian's administration. At the board meeting in January 1967, the last one prior to Adrian's assuming the presidency, Peter Klassen gave a brief report about the music program.[35] In somewhat typical fashion, Klassen stated, "There is biblical truth and there is musical truth. There is good and there is best. Our concern that the music we use should have integrity is very real, and our concern for artistic excellence in performance is no less real, since artistic excellence is thoroughly compatible with spirituality." He continued, "Much of the subject matter under study (such as the repertoire for the *A Cappella* choir) is naturally beyond the level a student might find or use in a local church situation."[36] Without intending to be provocative, Klassen had touched on an issue that proved to be at the core of concerns that Adrian tackled head on during the next several years.

Soon after his appointment, Adrian wrote a lengthy letter to Victor Martens in Germany, stating his intent to make changes in the music

33. Board of Higher Education Minutes, 14–16 January 1972, Vol. 57, Fld. 8, CMBS, Winnipeg.
34. College Committee Minutes, 24–25 March 1972, Vol. 57, Fld. 8, CMBS, Winnipeg.
35. Victor Martens was on leave from 1966 to 1968.
36. See attachment to Minutes of the Board of Higher Education of the Mennonite Brethren Bible College and College of Arts, 27–28 January 1967, Vol. 57, Fld. 5, CMBS, Winnipeg.

program. He invited Martens to spell out how he thought "the whole music department is to relate to the present and future work of the church."[37] During Martens's absence, Bill Baerg conducted the choirs and taught other courses until he was given a two-year leave of absence to study from 1970 to 1972.

In 1970, MBBC became associated with the University of Winnipeg, located at 515 Portage Avenue, a 20-minute city bus ride from MBBC. (MAID CMBS NP026-21-12)

In early December 1967, while Ewert was on sabbatical, Adrian lamented that there was only one religious studies course in the music program and proposed that one should be introduced for each year of the program.[38] At the board meetings later that month, a suggestion was made that "simple gospel singing" should not be neglected. Klassen's report to the board now struck a slightly different tone than his January statement. "In brief," he stated, "our philosophy of music is that of preaching the gospel to all men through the medium of music."[39] He

37. Letter from Adrian to Martens, 21 March 1967, Personal Correspondence with the Board of Higher Education, 1967–1968, Vol. 69, Fld. 37, CMBS, Winnipeg.

38. Sub-committee meeting, 7 December 1967, Vol. 57, Fld. 5, CMBS, Winnipeg.

39. 28–29 December 1967, Vol. 57, Fld. 5, CMBS, Winnipeg.

tried to assure his critics that "an attempt will also be made to serve the constituency more effectively in practical matters, through seminars and conventions on church music and related fields."

At the college sub-committee meetings in January 1968, Adrian reported that he had discussed matters with the music faculty and with students. When the music program itself was discussed, Adrian reported that there was "an enthusiastic endorsement for a change that would bring the program into line with the BTh and BRE programs" and offer a degree called Bachelor of Sacred Music.[40] The degree would emphasize hymnody, clinical work with choirs, the role of music in the church, as well as other aspects that would serve the needs of the church better. The Bachelor of Arts with music options would be eliminated. Adrian stated that the music faculty (Peter Klassen, Victor Martens, and Bill Baerg) agreed that this would be an improvement. The board instructed Adrian to encourage Klassen to study in the area of church music.

On 9 December 1968, the college sub-committee received notice that Victor Martens was resigning from the college. Two reasons were cited: 1) he had difficulty fitting into the Bible college goals; and 2) he was not interested in the direction that the conference was moving in terms of church music.[41] At a subsequent meeting in January 1969, a more extensive summary was included.

> *The objectives of the music department, to prepare workers for the church and to transmit a knowledge and love for church music, are in Adrian's administration more strictly adhered to. Martens feels that his musical training and background are not really at the core of the goals of our Bible college. He is cramped in the setting that does not readily accept the fine arts for art's sake. He would like more freedom in artistic musical creativity. He has become a performer and an artist.*[42]

At the same meeting, the committee wrestled with how to deal with Klassen's application for a sabbatical. Klassen was intending to study musicology rather than church music. He appeared before the committee to speak to the concerns. He felt that it was too late for him to change majors and felt that his studies would also relate somewhat to church music.

In January 1969, the board accepted the president's recommendation that Klassen be given a sabbatical on condition that a replacement be found and "providing his doctoral studies are directed to the college needs for a

40. Minutes of the College Sub-Committee, 14 January 1968, Vol. 57, Fld. 5, CMBS, Winnipeg.
41. College sub-committee meeting, 9 December 1968, Vol. 57, Fld. 5, CMBS, Winnipeg.
42. College sub-committee meeting, 7 January 1969, Vol. 57, Fld. 5, CMBS, Winnipeg.

church music program of instruction."[43] At the same meeting, the board accepted a proposal for a revised music program called the Bachelor of Sacred Music, which later was renamed Bachelor of Church Music. It included two religious studies courses in each of the three years.[44] The music program rapidly became one of the elements at the core of the crisis that peaked in 1970–1971. During the years of Baerg's absence, several temporary replacements were appointed, including Howard Dyck (1969–1971) and Roland Sawatsky (1971–1973). Dyck conducted the Oratorio performance in spring 1971. He was released after two years at the college, further fracturing relationships.

MBBC faculty, 1969–1970 (l-r): Henry H. Voth, David Ewert, Allen Guenther, Vern Ratzlaff, Herb Swartz, and John Regehr. (MAID CMBS NP026-02-64)

Beginning in 1970, the main annual Oratorio performances were joint performances sponsored by MBBC and CMBC and were usually held in the Centennial Concert Hall. Bill Baerg and George Wiebe alternated in conducting the choirs, although sometimes the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra was the main sponsor and their conductor directed the choir that had been prepared by the college conductors. In 1975, the first church music seminar sponsored by the two colleges was held. Various professional guest musicians were invited as resources and large numbers of participants came from across Canada. In 1985, the well-

43. Minutes, Board of Higher Education, 17 January 1969, Vol. 57, Fld. 5, CMBS, Winnipeg.

44. President's report to the Board of Higher Education, 18 January 1969, Vol. 57, Fld. 5, CMBS, Winnipeg.

known conductor of the Robert Shaw Chorale conducted the choir in Brahms's *Ein deutsches Requiem*. In 1987, Helmut Rilling was the guest conductor of the choir performing Haydn's *Creation*. These events continued to keep the music department highly visible in Winnipeg and beyond. Other music faculty also contributed significantly, including Irmgard (Braun) Baerg who made major recordings that could frequently be heard on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and other radio outlets. The *Mennonite Piano Concerto* was the most acclaimed of these.

The 1970 convention and its aftermath

The year 1970 proved to become a critical turning point in the history of the college. President Adrian began what might be termed a "crusade" in support of his evolving vision of the future of the college.

There was considerable sensitivity about how the college name impacted its acceptance by the constituency. Should the college market itself as a Bible College and College of Arts, or should it market itself as a Bible college with two divisions—a theology/Bible division and an arts division. Beginning in 1963, the college had issued two separate catalogues, a Bible College catalogue and a College of Arts catalogue. In January 1970, when MBBC was about to establish its association with the University of Winnipeg, the board decided to use an umbrella name with two divisions, thereby allowing the publication of only one catalogue. The first two catalogues after the full implementation of the new agreement (1971–1972 and 1972–1973) made no reference to the College of Arts on the cover. The third catalogue (1973–1974) and subsequent catalogues until 1983–1984, however, were entitled "Mennonite Brethren Bible College and College of Arts." Thereafter, the catalogues reverted to the title "Mennonite Brethren Bible College" with no references to a College of Arts either on the cover or elsewhere in the catalogue.

When the board met in Saskatoon in July 1970, it was obvious that the college was facing serious problems. Following the report of the chair of the college committee, Henry W. Redekopp, a lengthy discussion ensued because of the decreasing enrolment and the increasing criticism from the constituency.[45] As a first step, the board decided to defer the building project for which considerable funds had already been collected.

The main agenda, however, focused on President Adrian's paper entitled "A Radical Option for MBBC." This paper was of major significance in bringing the developing crisis to a head. Adrian contended that it was "born with him due to an interaction on his part with the

45. Board of Higher Education Minutes, 3–4 July 1970, Vol. 57, Fld. 7, CMBS, Winnipeg.

majority of his staff and many in the constituency." His intent, he stated, was to evoke debate and to "force" a decision.[46]

First, Adrian proposed a program that would consist "almost entirely of biblical, theological, and related subjects, leaving the teaching of arts subjects largely to secular universities and arts colleges." Programs in evangelism, Christian nurture and worship, and the preparation of laymen for Christian professions would serve to focus teaching on areas of primary competency.

More specifically, Adrian proposed that senior arts courses would be dropped and courses would be geared to pursuing a BA degree with a major in theology and a BTh or BRE degree. A "certain amount" of music might be permitted as an option. The music program would be "radically revised by dropping the professional and technical aspects of musical training." A degree in music would likely be dropped altogether. "The college," he stated, "would provide instruction essentially in the functional emphasis of church music."

The "practical" department, Adrian stated, should be expanded to provide exposure to Christian ministry in the inner-city, including church growth clinics and counselling opportunities in the city. In terms of the BD program, Adrian proposed an expansion for students who had completed a BA degree.

In summary, Adrian stated that the new program would be a radical revision of the former three-fold program of theology, arts, and music. The rationale he gave for the changes was as follows: 1) the present program had resulted in confusion and division in the conference; 2) the program had not succeeded in attracting students; 3) although a Christian liberal arts college was valid, the priority for MBBC ought to be theological and biblical training; and 4) there was a need to become united about the type of educational program that the conference wished to support.

Although Adrian acknowledged that the implications of such a program were not entirely clear, he projected that one-half of the present faculty might have to be phased out. Student enrolment might decrease, at least temporarily, but there could be cost savings with a reduction in salaries and there would also be no need to pursue a building program.

Some board members questioned whether the proposal involved a radical change in basic philosophy as spelled out at the 1967 Coaldale conference. Adrian seemed to acknowledge this and stated that his

46. A draft copy of the paper is attached to the Minutes, MBBC Executive meeting, 30 June 1970, Vol. 57, Fld. 6, CMBS, Winnipeg.

observations were that the focus of other institutions "tends to become rather hazy when the program is too wide or divergent." As a result, he stated, some had phased out theology and concentrated on arts, thereby losing constituency support.[47] Other concerns were also expressed. The board decided to appoint a study commission to plan and study an increased theological emphasis.[48]

The discussions revealed that a rift was developing between most of the faculty and the president. Board members called for involvement of the faculty in the study. Adrian's response was that faculty had been informed and that he was corresponding with Dean Ewert, who was in India.

When the executive met in October, they discussed a plan of action for the commission.[49] Adrian again explained his option, which members discussed at length. Ewert, who had just returned from India, remarked that although he would personally enjoy teaching in such a situation, the proposal was not realistic, and the constituency was not large enough to support it. The board felt that caution was needed and that the constituency needed assurance that the college was still committed to the guidelines Adrian had presented in Coaldale in 1967. F. C. Peters was invited to the meeting to give his assessment. His opinion was that dropping the arts courses might be the "death warrant" of the college, that the student potential was not great enough to support a seminary, and that an integrated program was the best solution. The problem of the college was not its program but that it no longer provided quality leadership,[50] Peters stated.

The full board met again in late December. Adrian gave an optimistic and bold report. One of the key elements in his report was the recommendation of a four-year trial of a BD program. "We believe it is now time to act in accordance with our mandate and with the needs of our conference today,"[51] he stated. He proposed a series of minimum goals to be evaluated at the end of the period. But the report also noted the resignation of several faculty. Most importantly, it included the resignation of David Ewert as dean. The board met with Ewert to ask him to reconsider his decision. The ensuing discussion revealed that the faculty was upset by what it believed to be a unilateral implementation

47. See Board of Higher Education Minutes, 3–4 July 1970, Vol. 57, Fld. 7, CMBS, Winnipeg.

48. *Yearbook: Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, 60th Convention* (1970), 115

49. Executive Committee meeting, 23–24 October 1970, Vol. 57, Fld. 7, CMBS, Winnipeg.

50. Ibid.

51. Report to the Board of Higher Education, 29–30 December 1970, Vol. 57, Fld. 7, CMBS, Winnipeg.

of decisions. Faculty felt that the arts courses were important for the financial viability of the college and that students were not in favour of the changes. Ewert stated that he would only consider remaining as dean if the Radical Option would be set aside. He was asked to postpone a final decision until the end of the academic year. In April 1971, Ewert submitted his resignation from the faculty effective June 1972.[52] Despite the various concerns, the board agreed to adopt Adrian's proposal on an interim basis.

The board also met with the conference executive who questioned the rationale for the program changes since these did not appear to coincide completely with the Radical Option for MBBC. At an *in camera* meeting, the board raised concerns about the extent of faculty involvement in the process.

The commission met in January 1971 and called a meeting of local pastors, choir directors, and other musicians to consider the direction of the music program.[53] But in February, the executive expressed concern that no communication had yet been received by the board. During the following months, both the president and Peter Klassen prepared papers on the philosophy of music.[54] In February, the college executive met with the music faculty (Peter Klassen, Howard Dyck, and Jake Klassen) to discuss the music program.

On 11 March 1971, the executive considered the possible appointment of Bill Baerg as head of the music department. However, the executive felt that such an appointment should be contingent on his "positive response to the president's policy paper re. the music department."[55] In April, the president reported that Peter Klassen would be leaving after one more year of service. In June, however, Klassen maintained that his verbal statement regarding resignation was not intended as a formal statement of resignation. Baerg responded to the issue of his appointment, stating that, in his view, the differences between Klassen's paper and Adrian's were not irreconcilable and that he felt he could accept the position as head of the department.[56]

By spring 1971, the rift between the president and the faculty had become very serious. At the April meeting, the board suggested that a faculty representative be asked to attend board meetings. Two months

52. Executive Committee meeting, 23–24 April 1971, Vol. 57, Fld. 7, CMBS, Winnipeg. The resignation became effective September 1972.

53. Executive Committee meeting, 27 January 1971, Vol. 57, Fld. 7, CMBS, Winnipeg.

54. Executive Committee meeting, 17 February 1971, Vol. 57, Fld. 7, CMBS, Winnipeg.

55. Executive Committee meeting, 11 March 1971, Vol. 57, Fld. 7, CMBS, Winnipeg.

56. Executive Committee meeting, 24 April 1971, Vol. 57, Fld. 7, CMBS, Winnipeg.

later, Adrian submitted a letter of resignation, stating that his position had become untenable because of the report that the board chair had submitted to the *Herald*. He also accused the board of inability to make decisions. The board defended its position, stating that it was premature to make decisions when the commission was not expected to report until July.[57]

The Board of Higher Education report was published in the *Herald* in June and included a short statement by chairman Jack Block. In his report, Block referred to a meeting of faculty and board members in October 1970 during which "more heat was generated than light."[58] It had become clear that not all faculty supported Adrian's radical proposal, and it had prompted the resignation of Academic Dean David Ewert. In order to determine how to respond to the crisis, the board had decided to form a study commission and to do a survey to assess conference thinking. The report concluded with nine general observations arising from the survey. The most salient points of these observations were that there was general unity and support for the college, that seminary development was not supported, that the music "thrust" should be continued, and that there was considerable acceptance of the arts offerings.

The developing crisis prompted a special evening meeting of the faculty on 23 June at which the faculty responded specifically to the convention report of the board chairman. The minutes state that the report was written "in a way which influences the reading public in a fashion which makes free action in terms of faculty relationships, board action, and program articulation/implementation extremely problematical." The faculty reasserted its understanding of the primary goal of the college to train students for ministry in the church and for the development of Christian character and attitudes. The faculty admitted, however, that it was divided on the relative importance of theology and liberal arts to achieve its fundamental purpose. Finally, the faculty was unanimous in its support of Adrian as president of the college.[59]

Open wounds, 1971

The college experienced its most serious crisis during the spring and summer of 1971. Adrian visited several provinces at their conventions in spring. Using evocative images from the Old Testament, he delivered an address entitled "Burning Mouths or Burning Stumps (Isaiah 6)." He began his address by stating,

57. Executive Committee meeting, 23 June 1971, Vol. 57, Fld. 7, CMBS, Winnipeg.
58. *Mennonite Brethren Herald* (11 June 1971), 6–7, 11.
59. Faculty Minutes, 23 June 1971, Vol. 57, Fld. 7, CMBS, Winnipeg.

> *Christian theological education as supported by the church has no business to be in existence unless it concerns itself with "burned mouths," unless it focuses its prior task on bringing men and women into the presence of God; unless it focuses its attention on preparing men to have an awareness of being sent to evangelize, to preach, to proclaim, to communicate the gospel of Jesus Christ.*[60]

A *Herald* report on the Alberta convention stated that Victor Adrian[61] graphically presented "his own vision for the Bible college."

> *With the need for a good evangelical seminary at the graduate level in a Canadian context, the Bible college might co-operate with other denominations and thrust ahead into a great future in this area. At the undergraduate level, it should provide a strong theology program. Most of the arts might be given over to the University of Winnipeg, just ten minutes from the campus. Most delegates responded very enthusiastically to Adrian's imaginative proposal. Adrian hopes he can convince also the college board, the Canadian conference, and fellow faculty!* [62]

The report seemed to signal a further shift in Adrian's vision, minimizing the role of the liberal arts even more than previously. It also implied that Adrian's vision was not necessarily broadly shared—not even by the faculty and the board.

The lack of consensus or broad testing of the vision came into focus during the convention that met in St. Catharines, Ontario, from 1–4 July 1971. In advance of the convention, moderator J. H. Quiring wrote to the board warning that delegates had been made aware of the serious "disunity and lack of confidence within the faculty."[63] The president's public campaign for a particular option in view of the disunity could not easily be dealt with on the convention floor. "It seems to me," he stated, "that we cannot afford to throw our problem and all the suggested alternative solutions on the floor for open discussion by a concerned but largely uninformed and bewildered delegation." Quiring appealed to the board to prepare a realistic recommendation. He concluded, "We are paying too heavy a price in terms of frayed nerves, disturbed relationships, and misused finances."

In contrast to Block's report, Adrian's longer report was a decisive call to action and was much more critical of what he perceived to be the

60. Appendix 5, Board of Higher Education Minutes, 1–2 July 1971, Vol. 57, Fld. 8, CMBS, Winnipeg.

61. Letter to the Board of Higher Education, 17 June 1971, Vol. 57, Fld. 7, CMBS, Winnipeg.

62. Paul Tiessen, "Delegates enthusiastic about College proposal," *Mennonite Brethren Herald* (25 June 1971), 12.

63. Letter to the Members of the Board of Higher Education, 17 June 1971, Vol. 57, Fld. 7, CMBS, Winnipeg.

ambivalence and hesitancy of the recent past.[64] His report was entitled "Time for Decision is Now." First, Adrian listed several items of gratitude, including gratitude for "a faculty that confesses a commitment to Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord" and for a favourable association with the University of Winnipeg. The next section, however, sought to articulate a vision for the college that would involve "exploring new paths" and "breaking with the traditional way of doing things." The conference, he said, had endorsed two guidelines: 1) the primary task of MBBC was to prepare men and women for church-related ministries; and 2) the secondary task was to help Christians become effective witnesses in their various professions.[65] The arts program was to be "contributory" rather than central and was to help students form a Christian *Weltanschauung*. The introduction of a core program of biblical and theological studies was an effort to achieve the main purpose of MBBC.

The practical implications of this new focus, Adrian noted, would be that 40 percent of a student's program would be in biblical and theological studies and that there would be a reduction in arts courses with most of the offerings in introductory courses in philosophy, sociology, English, and history. The music program would place greater emphasis on educational, evangelical, and worship needs of the local church. Practical theology would be given more emphasis. In marked contrast to the findings of the study commission, Adrian argued that the college should embark on an expansion of the BD program, beginning with a four-year trial.

The last section of Adrian's report was entitled "Decision." Adrian began by citing I Kings 18:21, "How long will you go limping with two opinions." He criticized the board for vacillation and hesitancy in moving toward definite commitments and acknowledged "some division" in the faculty. The decision was now up to the conference. It had to make decisions based on the following alternatives:

1) *To continue the present course with a minimum theological requirement and a number of arts courses with small enrolments.*
2) *To concentrate on an undergraduate and graduate theological program.*
3) *To close MBBC and concentrate on a seminary program.*
4) *To consider developing a joint seminary with the US Mennonite Brethren Church.*

Adrian's own preference was the second alternative, which included a strong theological core with less emphasis on the arts courses.

64. Ibid.
65. Ibid., 7.

Prior to the convention, the board met on 1 July to try to deal with the fallout from the published reports. The faculty was troubled and submitted a response. It was concerned about the false impressions that had been communicated and stated that this "seriously damages the prospects of regaining constituency confidence."[66] Peter Klassen verbally expressed his intention to resign and Howard Dyck requested a hearing from the board regarding the termination of his service. Steps had already been taken to replace him. When Adrian was asked whether he would reconsider his resignation, he replied that he was not certain what direction the board was taking. Peter Klassen protested that his verbal statements about resignation were not intended as a formal resignation. However, the board decided that his verbal statements had to be taken seriously. He was granted the right to appeal.

A day earlier, on 30 June, a meeting of representatives of the Bible schools, MBBC, and board members discussed the thorny question of the relationship between the various institutions. Papers were presented by the presidents of each of the Bible schools. The clear message was that MBBC could no longer continue along its present path. The board had an almost impossible task ahead. How could it resolve the various conflicting issues both within the college and in the constituency?

With regard to the seminary option, Adrian now suggested a "trans-denominational college."[67] The Alliance Church, he stated, had initiated negotiations. Cooperation with the US would be too narrow an approach and would not excite young people, he maintained.

The study commission presented a report to the board, although there was relatively little discussion of it.[68] A summary of the findings was published much later.[69] It revealed some concern about the Christian commitment of the faculty, about the need to foster "traditional views on Christian conduct," and about not "introducing new forms of Christian behaviour and morality." There was also a desire to continue to train workers for service in the church, the report concluded.

The college agenda at the convention opened with "An Analysis" by John Redekop, one of the board members. Redekop challenged the delegates to remember that a good college was "bound to be a place of academic and spiritual effervescence," that traditions would constantly

66. Board of Higher Education Minutes, 1–2 July 1971, Vol. 57, Fld. 8, CMBS, Winnipeg.

67. Board of Higher Education Minutes, 1 July 1971, Vol. 57, Fld. 8, CMBS, Winnipeg.

68. Only part of the report is attached to the board Minutes, 1–2 July 1971, Vol. 57, Fld. 8, CMBS, Winnipeg.

69. H. H. Dueck, "MBBC Study Questionnaire Results," *Mennonite Brethren Herald* (31 December 1971), 16.

be re-evaluated, that change was normal and necessary, and that shortcomings were not always the fault of the institution.[70]

In view of the criticisms of Block's printed report in the *Herald*, his report at the convention was prefaced by the statement that "this report represents the views of the chairman and was not accepted by the board."[71] There were, in fact, sharp differences both within the board and within the faculty. Adrian acknowledged that his report did not necessarily reflect the views of faculty and board.[72]

Vigorous discussion on the convention floor followed. David Neumann of British Columbia stated that the Bible institutes were no longer urging their students to attend MBBC. Some supported a stronger arts program at the college, whereas Adrian argued that the Coaldale convention in 1967 had asked for strong theological program. Jack Block suggested "a history of internal dispute at MBBC." Former professor, F. C. Peters, denied this.[73] *Herald* editor Jantz characterized the discussions as "at times tense because of implied or outspoken insinuations against various personalities in the College." H. R. Baerg, a former professor, stated that "98 percent of the Canadian church pastors couldn't share the college's views on eschatology." The music program was also severely criticized and there were calls for a discontinuation of the BD program and for launching discussions with the US constituency to establish a joint seminary.

In the end, the recommendations submitted by the board were all accepted. These included the following: 1) that the BD program be phased out at MBBC; 2) that a commission be appointed to study the future of post-graduate theological training; and 3) that the core curriculum, as spelled out by the president, be accepted.

The study commission on post-graduate training was specifically charged to investigate several alternatives, including a cooperative arrangement with Fresno, a trans-denominational or cluster seminary, and other potential options.[74] The published report on the convention concluded, "Most delegates shared a sense of relief that the immediate crisis had been weathered. The convention had given a clear indication that it wanted the Bible program at the MBBC emphasized."[75]

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70. "College and Constituency," *Yearbook: Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, 61st Convention* (1971), 56–58.

71. Ibid., 55.

72. Board of Higher Education Minutes, 2 July 1971, Vol. 57, Fld. 8, CMBS, Winnipeg.

73. "Canadian Conference in St. Catharines Decides to Look at New Options: 'Core Curriculum' accepted, BD program to be phased out," *Mennonite Brethren Herald* (9 July 1971), 11.

74. *Yearbook: Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, 61st Convention* (1971), 66.

75. *Mennonite Brethren Herald* (9 July 1971), 11.

Period of uncertainty—picking up the pieces

In the months following the convention, various attempts were made to come to terms with the new reality and to map the course for the future. The college committee met in mid-July and issued an "Open Letter" to the Canadian constituency.[76] It sought to reassure the constituency that it would re-evaluate, that the faculty was united in its attempt to support the board, and that the board would continue to promote the college. President Adrian agreed to continue in his role for the next two years and John Regehr was appointed acting academic dean. The BD program would be phased out, although new students would still be accepted for the 1971–1972 year. The core program would be implemented immediately, and the review of the music program completed.

In the meantime, the US Mennonite Brethren conference leaders had taken note of developments in Canada and, at their convention in Denver on 14 August, passed a resolution indicating their desire to cooperate in the operation of a General Conference seminary.[77] It opened the way for four Canadian members to sit on the board of directors of the Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary immediately. The Canadian moderator, J. H. Quiring, responded that because the Canadian conference had appointed its own study commission it would be premature to make such an appointment.

The immediate concern of the college was how the summer's crisis would impact the enrolment. The report in October indicated that the full-time-equivalent enrolment had declined from 90 in the previous year to 72 in the current year. The administration prepared a cost-analysis, and the board considered a new organizational structure and operational manual for the board and the college. In December, the college committee reviewed a music philosophy statement. The committee was not satisfied with the document and referred it back for further revision in order to reflect a better integration of the music program into the total college program.[78]

Several structural issues were addressed by the board and the college during this time of crisis. The college faculty prepared a new organizational structure of the Board of Higher Education and its committees that was accepted with minor changes by the board in January

76. *Mennonite Brethren Herald* (6 August 1971), 12.

77. The US conference held its convention prior to the General Conference Study Conference. Victor Adrian presented a paper on social action at the Study Conference, *Mennonite Brethren Herald* (27 August 1971), 16.

78. Minutes of the College Committee, 18 December 1971, Vol. 57, Fld. 8, CMBS, Winnipeg.

1972.[79] A major change in the faculty handbook involved a clarification of job descriptions, including that of the president.

In terms of program, the board accepted a revised philosophy of music statement that was clearly an attempt to respond to some of the criticisms from the constituency. The statement indicated the role of the music department in preparing students for various types of ministry in the church and society. It also stated that "church music must have artistic excellence in both performance and composition." It recognized the need for "significant theological courses that help the student to understand the Christian faith, the church, and the spiritual needs of the people."[80]

The January 1972 meeting was the first meeting of the entire board after the July crisis. It soon became obvious that major hurdles remained. First, although Adrian had accepted a further two-year term as president in July, he now asked to be released from that commitment. His resignation as president effective 31 July 1972 was accepted, and he was granted a sabbatical for 1972–1973. The board immediately began the search for a new president.

The next board meetings were scheduled to take place in late May. However, internal events at the college necessitated an emergency meeting in late February. The chair, Henry H. Dueck, opened the meeting commenting that "we are presently at the crossroads as far as our college is concerned."[81] To some extent the latest concerns were prompted by reactions from those who attended the recent ministers' course offered by the college. Some of the criticisms were that the college was not challenging students to enter full-time ministry, that there was obvious faculty disunity, and that the broad outline of the college's purpose was no different than the Bible institutes. The reference to faculty disunity probably focused on the continued tension between President Adrian and the former academic dean, David Ewert. Indeed Ewert, who was in his final year at the college, chose not to attend faculty meetings and essentially limited his participation to teaching his courses.

Mini-college with CMBC?

In December 1971, the college committee received a proposal from the Canadian Mennonite Bible College to create a joint mini-college. This was to consist of a four-session program in Christian education

79. See Exhibit B, Board of Higher Education Minutes, 14–16 January 1972, Vol. 57, Fld. 8, CMBS, Winnipeg.

80. Exhibit A, College Committee Minutes, 6 January 1972, Vol. 57, Fld. 8, CMBS, Winnipeg.

81. Board of Higher Education Minutes, 25 February 1972, Vol. 57, Fld. 8, CMBS, Winnipeg.

in February 1973 for people in the Winnipeg area. The proposal was referred to the board meetings in January where the pros and cons of a working relationship with CMBC were discussed. MBBC was identified as being more "evangelical" on the theological spectrum, whereas CMBC was identified as more "liberal." There was also a perceived difference on some undefined ethical matters. A motion was ratified "to proceed with the negotiations regarding the mini-college, provided that all faculty members involved can subscribe to their respective church's confession of faith."[82]

A joint meeting of CMBC and MBBC representatives was held at Bethel Mennonite Church on 24 March 1972. Although no formal minutes were kept, some notes written by H. H. Dueck were filed. The idea of a mini-college was not endorsed, probably primarily because of the reluctance of the Mennonite Brethren representatives. However, minor cooperative ventures were endorsed, including a joint ministers' course, an exchange of faculty for special topics, and some joint board meetings in the future. A news release was also prepared.[83] A subsequent proposal by the MBBC faculty to team-teach a church history course with CMBC was denied by the college committee.[84]

82. Board of Higher Education Minutes, 15–16 January 1972, Vol. 57, Fld. 8, CMBS, Winnipeg.

83. Meeting of MBBC and CMBC Representatives, 24 March 1972, Vol. 57, Fld. 8, CMBS, Winnipeg.

84. College Committee Minutes, 11 May 1972, Vol. 57, Fld. 8, CMBS, Winnipeg.

8

An Interim President: John Regehr, 1972–1974

The board convened an open meeting with MBBC faculty on 25 February 1972 when the faculty submitted a joint statement explaining its concerns.[1]

Taking stock

One concern was whether the college could operate the next year. The board strongly affirmed its resolve to continue to operate the college during the 1972–1973 academic year and appointed John Regehr (1925–2019) as acting president and Abe Dueck as acting academic dean.

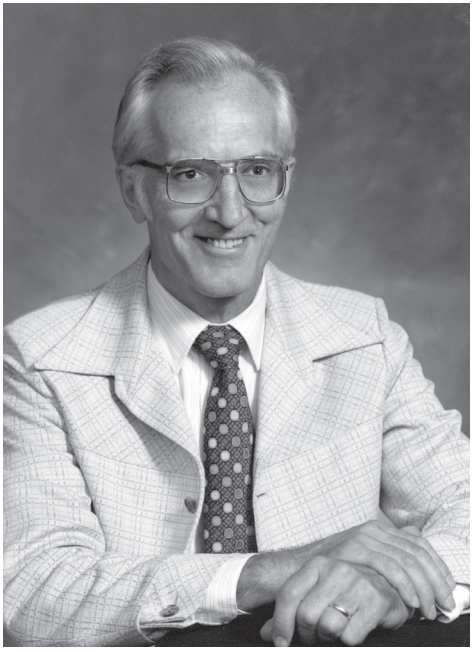
The board also endorsed the faculty concern about more flexibility in the core program. Of special significance was a brief statement regarding the board's understanding of the role of the college. It stated, "The college shall offer an integrated program involving theology, arts, and music courses at the bachelor's degree level. The aims of the college shall be two-fold: 1) to give students a Christian perspective to life and help them in their personal growth and development; and 2) to prepare workers for the church."[2]

The statement was remarkable considering the extensive dialogue and disagreement that had characterized these discussions during recent years. It was remarkable both in terms of its brevity and in terms of the priority it appeared to give to the concepts of "integration" and creating a "Christian perspective." Was this a move to give more prominence to the liberal arts and to allow the music program to continue with a more broad-based program rather than focusing on church-related ministries?

On 11 June 1972, representatives of the Mennonite Brethren Biblical

1. Board of Higher Education Minutes, 25–26 February 1972, Vol. 57, Fld. 8, CMBS, Winnipeg.

2. Ibid.



John Regehr (MAID CMBS NP026-23-05)

Seminary and the Mennonite Brethren Bible College met in Minneapolis to discuss the future of Mennonite Brethren theological education.[3] Papers on several issues were presented and discussed, including Mennonite Brethren identity and a model of Mennonite Brethren theological education. Once again, the overlap and coordination of the programs of educational institutions was the major concern.

Liberal arts college?

On 27 June 1972, the executive of the board convened a telephone meeting together with resource person, John Redekop, to consider a request by the conference executive to study the feasibility of operating a liberal arts college independently or together with CMBC or other groups. The conclusion was that this was not the right time and would simply create confusion in the light of the decision made at the January meetings. It would be more appropriate for the executive of the conference to appoint a committee rather than to have the board undertake the study.[4] Participants voiced renewed concern regarding the negative attitudes of the British Columbia constituency to the college.

Despite the reluctance, the study was undertaken, initially by Henry H. Dueck and John Redekop. A draft copy was circulated to board members by September. Six options were outlined, and board members were asked to submit responses to each. The options were listed as follows:

1) *Continue in keeping with the 25–26 February decision.*
2) *Develop a Christian liberal arts college in affiliation with the University of Winnipeg.*

3. Detailed Minutes, Exhibit C of College Committee Minutes, 21 June 1972, Vol. 57, Fld. 8, CMBS, Winnipeg.

4. Executive Minutes, 27 June 1972, Vol. 57, Fld. 8, CMBS, Winnipeg.

3) *Develop a Christian liberal arts college together with CMBC in affiliation with the University of Winnipeg.*
4) *Develop a Bible college together with CMBC.*
5) *Establish an interdenominational liberal arts college.*
6) *Close MBBC.*[5]

MBBC faculty, 1972–1973. Front row (l-r): Esther Wiens, Peter Klassen, Howard Loewen, John Regehr, and Vern Ratzlaff. Back row: Herb Giesbrecht, Abe Dueck, Bill Baerg, and George Epp. (MAID CMBS NP026-02-50)

On 20 October, Frank C. Peters proposed a merger of MBBC with the Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary.[6] A faculty response was printed in the same issue of the *Herald* appealing for support for the February/March proposal of the board. A diagram representing the college program was also published.[7] It was labeled the "three-in-one" concept and depicted the three areas in overlapping circles, with theology in the top circle, and arts and music in two overlapping circles beneath.

A residential college?

A Canadian Mennonite Brethren caucus met in Reedley, California, in November 1972 in conjunction with the General Conference convention. The five members of the Board of Higher Education who

5. Executive Minutes, 23 September 1972, Vol. 57, Fld. 9, CMBS, Winnipeg.
6. Letter to the editor, *Mennonite Brethren Herald* (20 October 1972), 14.
7. Ibid., 15.

were present (including Acting President John Regehr) convened to discuss the situation in the light of developments related to the seminary, and to formulate a proposal to be submitted to the Council of Boards in January 1973. Most of the options were quickly dismissed. The group focused on another proposal that the college committee had prepared in consultation with the faculty. The essence of this proposal was accepted for presentation to the Council of Boards in January 1973.

Students and faculty playing volleyball during the fall retreat at Manitoba Pioneer Camp, situated on the Manitoba-Ontario border, 1973. (MAID CMBS NP026-14-08)

The new proposal was unlike any of the six options above. The board now proposed that the college become a residential college in association with the University of Winnipeg.[8] The stage was thereby set for what could become the most important action to determine whether MBBC had a future. The entire board met on 13–14 January 1973 and critically reviewed the proposal. Serious objections were raised, but when the results of a ballot were tabulated, it was passed by a two-thirds majority.[9]

The next test came when the proposal was referred to the Council of Boards. There, the study committee's six options were tabled, and the proposal that "MBBC and the College of Arts become a residential college in association with the University of Winnipeg" was presented.[10] The discussion that followed showed continuing uncertainty and

8. *Mennonite Brethren Herald* (15 December 1972), 19.

9. Board of Higher Education Minutes, 13–14 January 1973, Vol. 57, Fld. 9, CMBS, Winnipeg.

10. Attachment to the Council of Boards Minutes, 12–14 January 1973, Vol. 57, Fld. 9, CMBS, Winnipeg.

disagreement. After lengthy debate and referral back to a committee to review the results, the proposal of the board was amended to remove the term "residential." It was then accepted by the Council of Boards, acting as conference in interim. In essence, this appeared to suggest that there would be no fundamental change in the nature of the college.

The board also had to deal with other difficult circumstances at the January meeting. In addition to the resignation of Victor Adrian from the faculty, three other faculty resignations were accepted—Allen Guenther, Henry Regehr, and Roland Sawatsky. Later, Peter Hamm also resigned. Two new appointments were made. Peter Klassen was reappointed to the music faculty, and George Epp was appointed to teach some history and German courses. In the succeeding months, the immediate concern focused on the search for a president. Several names were considered, including that of David Ewert, whose name was submitted by the faculty.

Changing the funding formula?

In May, a new threat emerged. The British Columbia Board of Reference and Counsel recommended that its support of the college through the conference levy come to an end after the 1973–1974 year.[11] In a desperate effort to prevent this action from proceeding, vigorous correspondence took place. Several college board members attended a meeting in British Columbia on 28 May. The result was that the proposal was withdrawn. The fact remained that there was a great deal of dissatisfaction, particularly in the British Columbia constituency, and student numbers and financial contributions from British Columbia were diminishing.[12]

When the board met in Three Hills, Alberta, in July 1973, the repercussions of the British Columbia proposal were still being felt. Jack Block reported:

> *In spite of the fact that the proposal was squelched, he had been asked by the BC Committee of Reference and Counsel to convey the sentiments of a rather large portion of the BC constituency to the Board of Higher Education. It would appear that a system of voluntary funding to support the college operation would satisfy a goodly number. According to Block, BC is rather disenchanted with the college at this time.*[13]

Continued uncertainty

The convention following the board meetings revealed continuing

11. See Minutes of the BC conference Board of Reference and Counsel, 31 May 1973, Vol. 206, Fld. 14, CMBS, Winnipeg.

12. Ibid.

13. Board of Higher Education Minutes, 7 July 1973, Vol. 57, Fld. 9, CMBS, Winnipeg.

disagreement and uncertainty regarding the future of education at the undergraduate and seminary level. The proposal, which had been ratified by the Council of Boards in January, came under significant criticism. Some were concerned that MBBC was becoming a liberal arts college. Others felt that the Bible schools were replacing the college. Robert Roxburgh of Vancouver stated that the BTh degree "had outlived its day."[14] By a narrow margin, the board recommendation was tabled, which left the board confused about whether it was to operate under the mandate ratified in 1971 at St. Catharines or under the mandate as authorized by the Council of Boards in January 1973. The proposal to operate a joint seminary with the US was accepted.

The 1971 St. Catharines convention had accepted the "core curriculum" proposed by the president. The 1973 Three Hills convention left a great deal of ambiguity regarding the future shape of the college. However, the delegates appeared to be tired of dealing with the issue and were willing to live with the ambiguity. As far as the board was concerned, it was time to turn their attention to resolving the leadership issue. Confidence in the college could not be regained without a president who commanded the respect of the constituency. This almost certainly meant that a new president could not be appointed from within the present faculty.

The immediate months following the 1973 convention were marked by attempts to mute the impact of several developments involving faculty, as well as attempts to change the course of the previous years. The question of whether the college could continue to operate beyond 1975 remained unresolved. The tone of the report of the convention in the *Mennonite Reporter* by a faculty member was of some concern to board members.[15] Even the "physical appearance" of some faculty members at the convention was addressed.[16] When the faculty met at a retreat in preparation for the fall semester, it responded to the criticisms and agreed to try not to offend the constituency. It also agreed to demand more of the students in terms of chapel attendance and commitment to the college.[17]

At about the same time, another controversy emerged, this time regarding George Epp's role in the recent Manitoba election and the

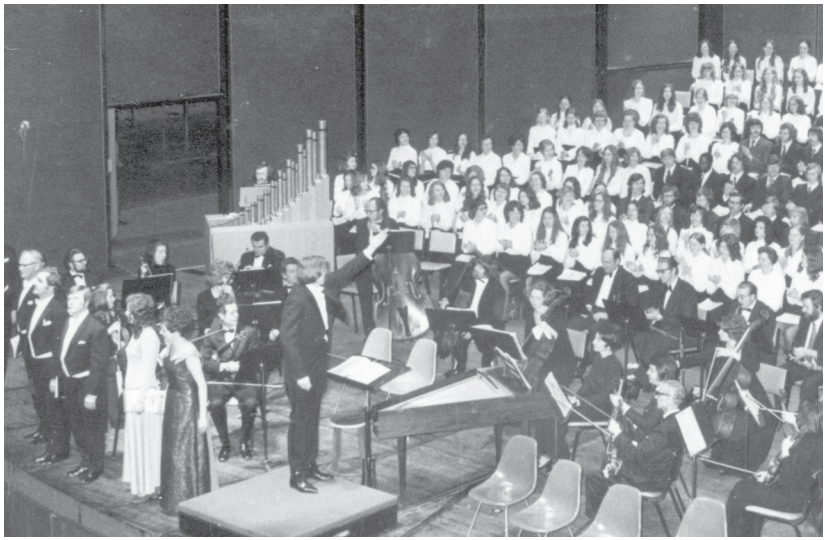
14. "Convention fails to resolve issues," *Mennonite Brethren Herald* (3 August 1973), 7–9.

15. Vern Ratzlaff, "MBs postpone decision on future of college," *Mennonite Reporter* (23 July 1973), 1, 12.

16. Presumably, this was a reference to the beard worn by a faculty member, Appendix A, Minutes of the College Committee, 12 September 1973, Vol. 57, Fld. 9, CMBS, Winnipeg.

17. Faculty Council Minutes, 3–5 September 1973, Vol. 57, Fld. 9, CMBS, Winnipeg.

conflict with a Mennonite Brethren candidate in the election. Finally, concerns were also voiced about Peter Klassen's editorial policies and comments he made during his one-year interim role as editor of the *Herald.*



Bill Baerg conducting the joint Oratorio choir (CMBC and MBBC) at the Centennial Concert Hall with orchestra and soloists at the front of stage. They performed Bach's **St. Matthew Passion***, March 1973. (MAID CMBS NP026-09-20)*

But other issues were also coming to the fore. Discussions had begun regarding the possibility of receiving government subsidies for the college. On 20 September 1973, a meeting took place attended by several University of Winnipeg representatives, including President Duckworth and three board members. The university appeared to be sympathetic to the college and its attempts to secure public funding.[18] The faculty prepared a statement indicating the positive and negative factors that might be involved in such a move. It advised that a "middle of the road" policy might be advisable. Such a policy would place limitations on the amount of money the college would accept to maintain control over its operation and mandate. Contact with Dr. Lorimer, Deputy Minister for Colleges and Universities, revealed that current legislation would not allow monies to flow to the Mennonite Brethren College of Arts.

The college enrolment during the first year of Regehr's interim presidency was at an all-time low of 43 full-time students, although the

18.College Committee Minutes, 21–22 September 1973, Exhibit E, Vol. 57, Fld. 9, CMBS, Winnipeg.

part-time enrolment increased slightly to 49. The faculty and board spent much time and effort in promoting the college and in student recruitment. The second year showed a marked increase to 58 full-time and 65 part-time students for a total of 123.[19] This increase marked the end of a period of ten years of steady decline in full-time enrolment from 160 in 1963–1964 to 43 in 1972–1973. Full-time equivalents showed a similar decline.[20]

Long-time MBBC cook Katie Thielmann serves dinner to a student, 1973–1974. (MAID CMBS NP026-11-01)

19. See Exhibit C, Minutes of the Expanded College Committee Meeting, 21 September 1974, Vol. 57, Fld. 10, CMBS, Winnipeg.

20. Full-time equivalents were determined by adding full-time enrolments (three or more full-course equivalents) plus part-time full-course equivalents divided by three.

9

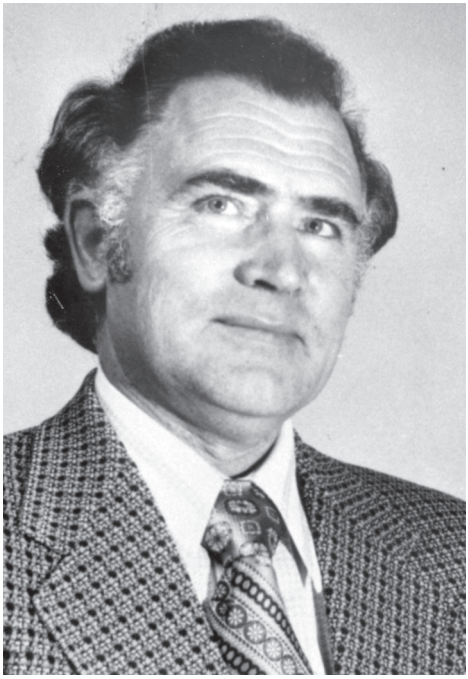
Redefining MBBC: Henry Krahn, 1974–1982

Major efforts were now underway to secure a president for MBBC. On 8 November 1973, Henry Dueck reported that he had contacted a prospective candidate, Henry Krahn (1923–1985). Krahn was a professor at Fresno Pacific College in California. In the meantime, however, the issues between Victor Adrian and David Ewert had been resolved and faculty recommended that Ewert be asked to become a candidate for the presidency. The board responded that Ewert had already agreed to accept a position at the seminary in Fresno and that it would not be appropriate to initiate such a move.

Significant efforts were made during the next several months to secure more information about Krahn and his suitability as a candidate by contacting those who knew him. Some concerns emerged that suggested the need for caution. Therefore, the college committee recommended that John Regehr be appointed for a three-year term. In January, the board met for its regular session and much of its agenda focused on the issue of a presidential appointment. The report by Henry J. Dick about the college committee action in December revealed some confusion about how to proceed. Dick indicated that the committee had requested additional information about Krahn. However, it was not yet ready to extend a call to Krahn.[1]

In the meantime, the executive had extensive conversations with people who worked closely with Krahn, particularly the faculty of Fresno Pacific College. Concerns focused on Krahn's perceived rigidity and strongly held beliefs.[2] However, he was reported to be "capable in organization and carrying out programs." The board invited the faculty to

1. Minutes of College Committee, 29 December 1973, Vol. 57, Fld. 9, CMBS, Winnipeg.
2. Board of Higher Education Minutes, 18–19 January 1974, Vol. 57, Fld. 9, CMBS, Winnipeg.



Henry Krahn (MAID CMBS NP026-02-11)

express its views considering the potential appointment. It strongly affirmed Krahn in terms of his academic, administrative, and teaching abilities but also expressed some concern about his ability to relate to the public and his "aggressive" nature. Although he had a well-articulated philosophy of education, some concern was expressed about whether it would fit the direction that had been set for the college.

The board then also met with Krahn. Henry Dueck, referring to the ambiguity about the direction of the college, indicated that the board was committed to the document that had been presented and passed by the Council of Boards in January 1973. Although it had subsequently been tabled at the convention in 1973, "it must be our working document," he stated. This was a strange statement. According to the 1973 convention minutes, tabling the motion meant that "the conference ratify the 'core curriculum' as spelled out in the president's report"[3] from 1971. A similar interpretation was given in the *Herald* report. Although the reason for this apparent contradiction was not stated, it appears that Dueck's conclusion was based on the fact that the Council of Boards, acting as conference in interim, had ratified the 1973 proposal with minor changes. Nevertheless, the fact remained that there were two different official versions of the college's mandate (i.e., the narrower, theology core model [1971] and the theology plus liberal arts model [1973]).

In the final analysis, the board decided to appoint Henry Krahn as president, and, by early February, Krahn had accepted the invitation. During the following months, preparations were made for the transition and for the July convention in Vancouver. During the meetings prior to

3. *Yearbook: Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, 61st Convention* (1971), 66; and *Yearbook: Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, 62nd Convention* (1973), 34.

the convention, the board agreed that it would not address the confusion about which mandate to follow, unless the question was raised by delegates. The board felt that there was little purpose in discussing the issue because events had moved beyond the circumstances that prevailed in 1973.

Who was Henry Krahn?

Henry Krahn was born of Mennonite immigrants from Russia in 1923. After spending his early years in Saskatchewan, the family moved to British Columbia. After high school, Krahn studied at MBBC and Tabor College and then worked for the Board of Foreign Missions in Oklahoma. Then, he pursued further education before the family went to India in 1956, serving as missionaries for six years. On their return from India, Krahn studied at the University of Washington in Seattle and also taught at Seattle Pacific College. In 1967, he joined the faculty at Fresno Pacific College, having completed his PhD in history. His dissertation dealt with the Anabaptists in Strasbourg during the Reformation.[4] Krahn was quite in tune with the Mennonite scholarship relating to the recovery of the Anabaptist vision associated with the Harold Bender era.

Krahn's personality, orientation, and diverse experiences led to a unique and dynamic period for MBBC. But it was also a very controversial period in the history of MBBC. It was a period that led in a different direction than the one that had been championed by President Adrian. Krahn had strong opinions and was articulate and forceful in his role. Theologically, he was a strong advocate of evangelical Anabaptism and was very critical of fundamentalism in all its forms. He frequently expressed concerns about the need for academic freedom, for integration of all knowledge, and for an "Anabaptist worldview." Students were often initially shocked by some of his strongly stated views, but, in due course, many were intrigued and enjoyed lively interactions with him both in class and in informal gatherings. He championed academic excellence and decried the narrow sectarian thinking that he felt was prevalent in much of the constituency. He generated lively discussions within the classroom and engaged in extensive personal dialogue with student leaders. He developed close relationships with many who at first were critical of him.

4. Henry G. Krahn, "An Analysis of the Conflict between the Clergy of the Reformed Church and the Leaders of the Anabaptist Movement in Strasbourg, 1524–1534" (PhD dissertation, University of Washington, 1969).

Setting the course

A considerably more positive mood could be felt as the new academic year got under way in fall 1974. The inauguration of Krahn as president took place on 22 September. J. B. Toews, the second president of MBBC, was the featured speaker. Full-time enrolment climbed from 58 in 1973 to 88 in 1974. The full-time equivalent increased from 81 to 117.

The board met for its usual mid-year meetings in January 1975. By then, various new initiatives were underway under Krahn's leadership. The academic dean, Abe Dueck, was now chair of faculty council. This was a pattern that Krahn was used to at Fresno Pacific College and gave Krahn more liberty to speak to issues rather than simply moderate discussions. New appointments were recommended and accepted, including Allen Guenther in Old Testament and Peter Hamm in sociology and cross-cultural communications as well as part-time registrar. James Pankratz was appointed on a half-time basis in world religions and culture and social change. The nature of these appointments signaled a clear change of direction toward a more academically oriented approach in keeping with Krahn's "liberal arts" philosophy of education.

During Krahn's first year, the statement of objectives as stated in the college catalogue was revised. The first sentence clearly reflected Krahn's influence. It stated, "MBBC is a church-related college with an integrated approach to knowledge, seeking to take God's truth as a unity, attempting to refrain from making unnatural divisions between the sacred and the secular." It continued, "MBBC, therefore, provides a broad and liberal education for the student in a context that acknowledges all truth as having its origin in God and that confesses Jesus Christ as the Truth."[5] This was language that differed greatly from that which had characterized the period under Adrian's administration. It gave a much higher profile to the liberal arts concept of the college.

The effort to sponsor joint ministers' courses with CMBC was abandoned after two years, and attention was now shifted to cooperating with the new joint seminary in Fresno. The Canadian conference also initiated a $500 subsidy for Canadian students studying in Fresno.

One of the problems that plagued the college increasingly was the lack of a sense of community in the student body and a lack of student identification with the college. The college community had become very heterogeneous with many centrifugal forces. Factors contributing to this included the large number of part-time students (many of whom took some or most of their courses at the University of Winnipeg and

5. *MBBC Catalogue*, 1975–1976, 6, Vol. 117, Fld. 4, CMBS, Winnipeg.

often came from other religious traditions) and the fact that many did not live on campus. One measure that was introduced to counter these developments was the establishment of four departments, each with a department head (Theology, Contemporary Ministries, Music, and Humanities and Social Sciences). Krahn argued that this would create a sense of identity within smaller sub-communities and would ensure faculty contact with students on a more personal basis.

Additionally, the faculty proposed that students who transferred from Bible schools and often spent only a year taking a full-time load at the college should be required to spread their degree requirements over two years. However, this proposal for deepening a sense of community was rejected because the board feared that it would be counter-productive and hinder students from completing their degree requirements at the college. Finally, a review of the admissions policy, which required that only Christian students be admitted as full-time students, concluded that only in exceptional cases should non-Christian students be admitted. The faculty felt that a change in this requirement would actually increase the fragmentation and that it was unnecessary because there was no pressure from the constituency to relax the admissions policy. Many recent criticisms of the college concerning ethical standards and behaviour would suggest a tightening of admissions policies rather than relaxing them.[6] However, the large number of part-time students made it increasingly difficult to enforce ethical standards.

In the meantime, the difficulties with the British Columbia constituency continued to concern the college and the board. Krahn visited British Columbia in late November and met with pastors and other leaders. He reminded people of the original vision of the founders of MBBC, assuring them that the present mission of the college stood in continuity with the past. In his report to the board, he stated that "there is often a significant difference between the image some people have of the college and what it actually is. We must work hard to overcome this problem."[7]

During the first year of Krahn's tenure, the British Columbia conference established a commission to study higher education. Two representatives, Harry Heidebrecht (pastor of Bakerview Mennonite Brethren Church) and Wally Unger (president of Columbia Bible College), met with the board, faculty, and students. Wally Unger submitted

6. See Board of Higher Education Minutes, 3–4 January 1975, Vol. 57, Fld. 10, CMBS, Winnipeg.

7. Ibid.

a brief review of his findings entitled "What MBBC Offers to the Bible School Student." His analysis was very revealing. During that year, 60 of the 155 students came from Bible schools, indicating how important the relationship with Bible schools continued to be. Unger reported that students had encountered a very different reality at college than the one they were used to at Bible school. There was a different type of "spiritual expression," he stated, referring to the nature and importance of spiritual nurture, prayer, sharing, and devotional exercise. There was a diminished sense of community, largely because of the nature of the relationship with the University of Winnipeg. Related to this was the strong academic emphasis, which was often very unsettling for Bible school transfers, he indicated.[8]

The full board met as usual in July 1975, this time in Regina, Saskatchewan, prior to the Canadian convention. The college brought its first set of recommendations under the Krahn administration to the board. These were forward-looking, rather than reflecting a preoccupation with rectifying the problems of the past. Nevertheless, issues such as developments in British Columbia needed to be addressed. The British Columbia commission report was presented and discussed. It listed four major concerns:

1) *The need to place more emphasis on the experiential and practical aspects and less on the academic.*
2) *The need to appoint faculty with stronger credentials in pastoral work and evangelism.*
3) *The need for faculty to reflect positively on the Bible institute experience of students.*
4) *The need to strengthen the biblical-theological base for the Contemporary Ministries program.*

These concerns echoed many of the concerns that had plagued the college in the past and continued to arise under Krahn's administration, despite a strong resurgence in college support during succeeding years.

By 1975, it was obvious that the British Columbia conference would opt out of the levy system of funding. This created a major challenge for the college because of the growing dependency on British Columbia, which had a large and rapidly growing constituency. Overall, however, the British Columbia commission report seemed to reflect an improved attitude toward MBBC. The change in funding, although negatively

8. See report attached to the Board of Higher Education Minutes, 4–5 July 1975, Vol. 57, Fld. 11, CMBS, Winnipeg.

impacting MBBC, was not simply interpreted as a move in opposition to the college but as a broader change in how programs were to be funded.

When the 1975–1976 academic year opened in September, there was much reason for optimism. The enrolment jumped from 155 (117 full-time equivalent, FTE) to 223 (161 FTE). This was the second highest in the history of the college and came only three years after the lowest enrolment. However, the British Columbia portion of this was only 20, indicating that a large segment of the constituency was not on board.

MBBC student council, 1976–1977. Front row (l-r): Alvin Klippenstein (president), Barry Loewen (publications), Maxine Penner (secretary-treasurer), Dave Unruh (vice-president), and Paul Siebert (cultural affairs). Back Row: Gerry Derksen (recreation), John Klassen (freshman representative), Vic Unruh (peace and social concerns), and Phil Siebert (missions). (MAID CMBS NP026-04-01)

In a departure from previous practice, the executive and several members of the board met in October. They initiated steps to strengthen various areas, particularly public relations and key faculty appointments. A strategic move was the appointment of a former president and faculty member, John A. Toews. He was invited to accept a joint position divided between the college and the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies. His responsibility would be divided between teaching, historical research, and extension education.[9] Toews accepted the appointment and began his duties in September 1976.

A master planning committee, consisting of four board members, three faculty members, and four members at large, was also established.

9. Minutes of the Executive Committee and members of the Board of Higher Education, 17–18 October 1975, Vol. 57, Fld. 11, CMBS, Winnipeg.

The committee's responsibility was to review the curriculum, study enrolment issues, and project the physical requirements for the future.[10]

In July 1976, the board and the Canadian conference convention held their sessions in Winnipeg.[11] Student spiritual life and the theology of college faculty emerged as major concerns once again. The personnel committee was asked to investigate whether faculty agreed with the confession of faith, although this request was withdrawn in October because of "further discussions on a broader level in the brotherhood."[12] There was also a suggestion that the rules of conduct be strengthened.

MBBC A Capella Choir, directed by Bill Baerg, 1977–1978. (MAID CMBS NP026-09-33)

Another thorny issue, first discussed *in camera* and then debated in the full session, dealt with the marriage breakdown of one of the faculty members, Peter Klassen. Should he be allowed to continue as a faculty member, or should his appointment be terminated? This was not an easy matter, given the prevailing attitudes at the time. The board decided that Klassen be allowed to continue with certain restrictions, including a reduced teaching load and not participating in public functions or speaking in chapels. If reconciliation did not occur within a year, his appointment would be terminated. The board reported its decision to the conference delegates, but, despite some uneasiness, the decision was not

10. Ibid.

11. See Minutes and reports of the Board of Higher Education, 1–6 July 1976, Vol. 58, Fld. 1, CMBS, Winnipeg.

12. Minutes of the Executive Committee and members of the Board of Higher Education, 22–13 October 1976, Vol. 58, Fld. 1, CMBS, Winnipeg.

challenged. Klassen was later given a one-year leave-of-absence (1977–1978) with a review of his status set for early 1978. In February 1978, the board again reviewed his case. After considering various alternatives, the board requested that he resign effective at the end of the academic year.[13] Klassen submitted his resignation and terminated his employment after 17 years.

In early September, the faculty spent several days at Camp Arnes, a retreat centre on Lake Winnipeg, discussing important issues related to the college's program and the relationship to the constituency. Topics discussed included the understanding of missions and evangelism, the professionalization of the ministry, the role of the contemporary ministries program, and the tensions in the constituency relating to the music program. The faculty felt that the understanding of missions needed to be broadened beyond the traditional views. While the preparation of church workers still was central to the college's purpose, the college needed to broaden its purpose to include a wider range of students. Some faculty felt that the college had not adequately responded to the criticisms of the constituency with regard to the music program. There was extensive discussion about how the music department could respond to the widening interest in popular music.[14]

The enrolment in September again exceeded expectations, with 252 students enrolled in one or more courses (190 FTE). British Columbia also posted an increase to 31 (26 FTE). The percentage of theology students compared to arts and music also remained relatively consistent, with nearly half of the students registered in theology. However, the background of students seemed to reflect significant changes, with an almost equal number of full-time students coming directly from each of three categories: high school, Bible school, and university.[15]

In the meantime, the master planning committee met frequently and worked on major program revisions as well as on building projections.[16] It recommended a combined four-year BA and BRS program and an expansion of the present facilities rather than relocation to another site. It also recommended a building project consisting of a multi-purpose facility. This facility would expand the library space, include a large auditorium, and provide more space for the music department and the

13. Board of Higher Education Minutes, 4 February 1978, Vol. 58, Fld. 2, CMBS, Winnipeg.

14. Faculty Minutes, 2–3 September 1976, Vol. 58, Fld. 1, CMBS, Winnipeg.

15. Registrar's report, Board of Higher Education, 4 February 1978, Vol. 58, Fld. 2, CMBS, Winnipeg.

16. Minutes of the Master Planning Commission, 8 November 1976, Vol. 58, Fld. 1, CMBS, Winnipeg.

archives. Further phases envisioned the replacement of Eben-Ezer Hall with a larger dining hall/dormitory and renovation of the administrative building. When the board met in January 1977, the building plans were endorsed. However, the board was hesitant to accept an integrated four-year program without further study to assess its potential impact on enrolment.[17]

The initial three-year term of President Krahn was quickly approaching the end and the board reviewed his reappointment. Not all the feedback that the board received was positive. Nevertheless, the board reappointed Krahn for an indefinite term with the provision that a year's notice be given should either party wish to terminate the arrangement.

The relationship with the University of Winnipeg came under review at the request of the religious studies department of the university because of its perception that the college was increasingly encroaching on its territory. More and more religious studies courses had become eligible for cross-registration. Several amendments to the initial agreement were accepted. These included changes in financial arrangements as well as clearer procedures for the vetting of courses and improved communication.[18] However, at the October meeting of the board, it became clear that difficulties remained. The religious studies department insisted that MBBC students take more courses there to secure a major in religious studies.[19] This issue was finally resolved by early 1978, but it was clear that the college would have to make a strong case in the future for any new courses to be cross-registered.[20]

Chair in Mennonite Studies

Of much greater significance for the college was the establishment of a Chair in Mennonite Studies at the University of Winnipeg in 1978. The Chair was established with substantial funding provided by the David Friesen Foundation and supported by a number of influential individuals in the academic community and by other Mennonite leaders. Although MBBC had no direct role in the establishment of the Chair, an advisory committee was formed that included a member from the college. Professor Harry Loewen, who had previously taught German

17. Board of Higher Education, 28–29 January 1977, Vol. 58, Fld. 1, CMBS, Winnipeg.

18. See Minutes and reports of the Board of Higher Education, 30 June to 1 July 1977, Vol. 58, Fld. 2, CMBS, Winnipeg.

19. Minutes of the Executive Committee, 21–22 October 1977, Vol. 58, Fld. 2, CMBS, Winnipeg.

20. Report of Academic Dean, Board of Higher Education, 4 February 1978, Vol. 58, Fld. 2, CMBS, Winnipeg.

at MBBC and then taught at Wilfrid Laurier University for a number of years, was appointed to the Chair and continued until his retirement in 1995. The Chair developed rapidly, attracting many students to various courses, establishing the *Journal of Mennonite Studies*, and organizing annual lectureships that drew large numbers of attendees from the surrounding communities and beyond.

Although the relationship of the Chair with MBBC and its faculty was always cordial, the presence of the Chair created some problems for the college. Some courses overlapped significantly with courses at the college. Loewen became a popular lecturer and attracted many students whose home base was MBBC. The tuition fee at the university was also lower than at the college. MBBC defined itself as an Anabaptist/Mennonite institution and was reluctant to give up or weaken course offerings that were central to its identity. The further migration of students to the university also increased the danger of community fragmentation. But it was not possible or desirable to oppose such a venture when, in other respects, the college relied heavily on the good will of the university and those who spearheaded the program development of the Chair.

Government grants

Several other major initiatives began during the late 1970s. One pertained to the increasing financial pressures that MBBC as well as other Christian colleges were facing. Six institutions—Canadian Mennonite Bible College, Canadian Nazarene College, St. Andrews College, St. John's College, Winnipeg Bible College and Theological Seminary, and Mennonite Brethren Bible College and College of Arts—submitted a brief to the Minister of Education that sought to "lay a philosophical basis for legislative change and interpretation in the Manitoba context."[21] After providing a lengthy rationale and pertinent information, it made three specific recommendations:

1) *That all the institutional signatories to this brief and programs in Appendix A be listed in Regulation E10-R8 of the Education Department Act, section 1 (f), be included in the definition of a university for purposes of student bursaries and scholarship eligibility;*
2) *That the Universities Grants Commission be instructed to provide for unit funding for those programs outlined in Appendix A that, at present, are not receiving such funding; and*

21. See "Brief to the Minister of Education Re Church-related Institutions of Higher Education and Theological Training," attached to the Board of Higher Education Minutes, 4 February 1978, Vol. 58, Fld. 2, CMBS, Winnipeg.

3) Further, that, in approving the above two recommendations, the theological-philosophical academic freedom and autonomy of these institutions be guaranteed as is the prevailing pattern in other provinces.

The full board reviewed the issue at its January 1979 meeting and agreed that the college be allowed to accept government funds subject to two conditions: 1) that the autonomy of the college not be jeopardized with respect to such issues as admission and graduation requirements, academic program, faculty appointments, and administration; and 2) that the grants not create a functional dependence on government funds which could jeopardize the viability of the college if the grant were to be discontinued for some reason.[22]

The original brief was further revised before it was submitted to the Minister of Education.[23] A draft funding formula was also endorsed although it would be a long time before funding became a reality.

Building committee for the multi-purpose addition to MBBC, 1978–1979, (clockwise, starting at top left): Lillian Stobbe, Henry Dick, Harold Jantz, Helmut Huebert, Harry Giesbrecht, Harold Dueck, Bill Fast, Abe Dueck, Henry Redekopp, Henry Krahn, Abram A. DeFehr, George Fast, Walter Kehler, and Cornelius Martens. (MAID CMBS NP026-04-02)

New era of stability

The reports at the annual convention in July 1978 in Three Hills, Alberta, sounded an optimistic note. Particularly gratifying was the successful

22. Board of Higher Education, 26–27 January 1979, Vol. 58, Fld. 3, CMBS, Winnipeg.

23. "Funding for Church-Related Colleges," report attached to Minutes of the Executive of the Board of Higher Education, 28 February 1979, Vol. 58, Fld. 3, CMBS, Winnipeg.

fund-raising effort for the new building project that was slated to begin almost immediately and was expected to be completed by January 1979. Krahn gave a very positive report about student life on campus and assured the delegates that, after a thorough review of the academic program, the decision was made that "the biblical-theological thrust of the college must remain central."[24] The enrolment projections for the 1978–1979 year were somewhat less optimistic, however. As it turned out, the actual enrolment declined from 181 to 151 FTE. Therefore, the financial pressures increased, and various means were sought to reduce expenditures and increase constituency giving.

Dedication of the new multi-purpose addition, 1979. On the platform (l-r): Helmut Huebert, Cornelius Martens, George Fast, Henry Krahn, Peter R. Toews, and Abe Konrad. The construction provided additional library and archives space, a 175-seat chapel/seminar room, music studios and practice rooms, and faculty offices. (MAID CMBS NP026-13-14)

In January 1979, the college was dealt a severe blow with the sudden death of John A. Toews after less than two years of service under the Krahn administration. Toews was a symbol of the college's links with its vibrant earlier history and of its central role in the history of the Canadian and North American conferences. Such links were deemed critical in maintaining the ongoing credibility and sustainability of the college.

Enrolment at the college continued to be relatively stable in the next academic year (1979–1980) with a full-time enrolment of 158 FTE. The nature and quality of campus community life continued to be a major

24. See "Partnership with churches is gratifying," 1978 Convention Insert, *Mennonite Brethren Herald* (9 June 1978), 10–13.

concern. The president noted that the association with the university had advantages as well as disadvantages. The negative aspect was that many students were drawn away from the influence of faculty and fellow students.[25] One response was to require all students taking more than eight hours per semester to live on campus during their first two years. At the July 1980 meetings, the board acted on a new core program that included several new courses. One course was called "Introduction to College." It was intended to strengthen the orientation of new students to the college. The other course was called "Studies and Vocation." This course was intended to help senior students "to deliberately reflect on their studies and to understand how their studies can provide the basis for future service and growth."

Several new faculty appointments were considered by the executive at the May 1980 meeting. The recommendations by the faculty generated intense discussions both about the candidates and about the process of recruitment. The appointment of Eric Mierau to teach in the area of missions raised particular concerns about whether Mierau represented "the denominational view of mission and evangelism." Nevertheless, he was offered a two-year appointment in missions and as registrar. Within a few years, the question of his reappointment was one of the factors that led to a crisis under the Ewert administration.

Unresolved issues

Concerns about the college resurfaced when the British Columbia pastors met in May 1980. At the convention in Winnipeg in July 1980, there were comments about a lack of vision/mission at the college and the continued squeeze between the college and other institutions, including the Bible institutes and the seminary.

The report in the *Herald* by editor Jantz was entitled "Still seeking a place in the heart." The report began with a statement made by an unidentified former teacher at MBBC: "How long can a group of people work without the encouragement and affirmation of the brotherhood? All we got was criticism."[26] While the college continued to train students as ministers, teachers, and missionaries, the focus was much broader in preparing students for service in many different vocations, the report stated. Focusing on the identity struggle, it continued: "The Bible college is probably less a Bible college than a Christian liberal arts college . . . .

25. Minutes of the Executive of the Board of Higher Education, 3 May 1980, Vol. 58, Fld. 4, CMBS, Winnipeg.

26. *Mennonite Brethren Herald* (18 July 1980), 11–12.

[The] difficulty is that the Bible college has kept a name and changed the identity." One delegate asked why there were so few non-ethnic Mennonites and why students were not saying, "I want to be a missionary; I want to serve the Lord." A round of applause followed.

Institutional evaluation and continued uncertainty

The board decided to devote a major block of time to a review of the college in January and to conduct an evaluation of all personnel, including the president.[27] In October 1980, Abe Konrad was appointed to prepare a plan for an institutional evaluation. Specific action plans were adopted in January 1981.[28]

At the faculty council meeting in November, concerns were raised about whether the music program was meeting the needs of the church in an era when popular music was replacing traditional hymnody. The college's university affiliation, it was stated, might be pushing it away from the college's role directed toward practical ministry.[29]

The Canadian conference convened an inter-school leadership consultation in Clearbrook in November 1980. At that consultation, F. C. Peters presented a paper on denominational education for the 1980s. In Part II of his presentation,[30] he focused specifically on Mennonite Brethren education. First, he emphasized the need for schools to foster an evangelical interpretation of Anabaptism. Among the specific expectations of Mennonite Brethren schools that he identified was the need for sufficient emphasis on the liberal arts and humanities. He lamented that Mennonite Brethren "seem to be unsure of the role of arts and humanities in the post-secondary schools which are designed to train mature Christians and Christian workers."[31] At the practical level, Peters advocated an individual identity for each institution while recognizing that there would be some overlap between institutions. The spirit of cooperation between schools should be facilitated by a well-articulated and understood transfer of credit, especially between the Bible institutes and the college. Peters also offered other practical suggestions, but none of them appeared to provide an adequate solution to the problems facing the constituency.

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27. Board of Higher Education Minutes, 3–4 June 1980, Vol. 58, Fld. 4, CMBS, Winnipeg.

28. Board of Higher Education, 30–31 January 1981, Vol. 58, Fld. 5, CMBS, Winnipeg.

29. Faculty Council Minutes, 6 November 1980, Vol. 58, Fld. 5, CMBS, Winnipeg.

30. Frank C. Peters, "The Challenge of Mennonite Brethren Education for the 80s" (paper presented at the Canadian Conference Inter-School Leadership Consultation, Clearbrook, 14–15 November 1980), Papers and Essays, Box 6, Fld. O, no. 1, CMBS, Winnipeg.

31. Ibid., 10.

The enrolment at the college during the 1980–1981 academic year showed a small decline in total course registrations, although the total number of students enrolled stood at 207. A further gradual decline was reported in 1981–1982 with a total of 199 students.

MBBC dorm council, 1981–1982. Front row (l-r): Bill Hamm, Marianne (Foth) Enns, Delbert Enns, Andy Prins, and Ruth Balzer. Back row: Bonnie Loewen, Bill Dyck, Ruth Loewen, and Sig Polle (faculty). (MAID CMBS NP026-35-06)

One of the striking developments during the Krahn era was the rate of faculty turnover. The reasons are not all easily identified, but they include the recruitment of faculty to the seminary in Fresno and to other institutions. It is likely that the continuing attacks on the institution and internal dissatisfaction and tension were also involved. Faculty members who left during this era included Howard Loewen, Vern Ratzlaff, Hugo Jantz, Erwin Penner, and Allen Guenther. Howard Loewen (theology) and Allen Guenther (Old Testament) were respected members of the faculty who were appointed to the faculty of the seminary in Fresno. They, and other Canadians who joined the Fresno faculty (most of whom were alumni of MBBC), added to the increasing confidence that the Canadian constituency had in the seminary and simultaneously moved attention and confidence away from MBBC in terms of its role of providing leadership for Canadian churches.

Vern Ratzlaff, who joined the faculty in 1966 after a number of years as teacher and principal of Sharon Mennonite Collegiate in Yarrow, British Columbia, was a popular but also controversial faculty member

during his tenure until he resigned in 1976. He had a BSW degree from the University of British Columbia and was a candidate for an MA degree but never completed the degree. He had not attended any Mennonite Brethren or Mennonite schools prior to his appointment at MBBC. He enrolled in some courses in the theology program concurrently with his teaching responsibilities. He taught courses in philosophy, church history, and theology and served as dean of students for several years. His unique brand of humour and his easy-going relationship with students stood in stark contrast to the more traditional and formal patterns of the previous era. At the same time, his theology was perceived as "liberal" and in tension with the more conservative theology of the denomination. While he was often criticized, formal action to remove him from the faculty was never considered.

MBBC women's volleyball team with coach Brian Plett standing in back, 1978–1979. Players (l-r): Hane-Lore Ekkert, Val Bergen, Lori Wiebe, Diane Goertzen, Evy Derksen, Val Pauls, Irene Bergen, Mary Bergen, and Karen Thielman. (MAID CMBS NP026-43-06)

The institutional evaluation process signaled the advent of another crisis at MBBC and the approaching end of the Krahn era. The action plan for the evaluation adopted in January 1981 stipulated the creation of two separate evaluation teams—an internal team and an external team. The college administration was asked to develop the detailed procedures. They brought a general proposal to the board in July 1982. In the meantime, however, it became clear that Krahn was not happy with the procedure and that there was significant tension between him and the

board chair, Abe Konrad. Therefore, Krahn took a pre-emptive step by writing a letter of resignation dated 17 March 1982.[32]

Despite Krahn's decision to resign, the college administration proposed an evaluation procedure that differed from the one set out by the board. The administration proposed that one evaluation team "conduct all parts of the evaluation." The viability of this approach, it stated, was demonstrated by an earlier Canadian Mennonite Bible College review.[33] Krahn explained that this document was not intended as a counter-proposal. Rather, he stated, it outlined a procedure arrived at through consultation with senior faculty to achieve the evaluation decided upon by the board in January. He argued that "it establishes one evaluation team rather than internal and external teams which might be interpreted as internal versus external." In the end, the board reaffirmed its decision to have an external team and an internal team. The internal institutional self-study was to be coordinated by a faculty member. Both external and internal reports were to be submitted to the board by January 1983.

The end of a dynamic era

The board accepted Krahn's resignation as president effective 30 June 1982. Krahn was granted a sabbatical for the following year, with the expectation that he would return as a regular faculty member in 1983–1984. The board also took immediate action to initiate a presidential search procedure.

While the Krahn era was often viewed very critically by much of the constituency, for many students it was viewed as a very stimulating and life-changing era. Some former students organized a reunion in 2010 where many reflected on their positive experiences during that time. Valerie Krahn Pierce, Henry and Alice's daughter, also presented her own reflections. "My Dad," she stated, "came with a deep and abiding sense of vision and purpose to take MBBC to the next step in its evolution, making the Bible college experience relevant and meaningful for students at the end of the 20th century." She continued,

> *My dad loved intellectual debate. He believed in "freedom of thought." Many people thought of him as a small "L" liberal. What I know is that he was committed to the verse in John 8:32, "Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free." There were still pockets of communities that worried that too much conversation about faith issues could lead to disillusionment and*

32. Letter to the Executive of the Board, 17 March 1981, Vol. 58, Fld. 5, CMBS, Winnipeg.

33. "MBBC proposal Regarding Institutional Evaluation," attached to the Board of Higher Education Minutes, 2–3 July 1981, Vol. 58, Fld. 6, CMBS, Winnipeg.

secularization. My dad thought just the opposite way. . . . He was not afraid to take his students' doubts or fears seriously, but challenged them to work through to a new understanding of their life purpose. . . .

"Know the truth and the truth will set you free." Talk. Debate. Wrestle with issues. Express the incongruities you see. . . . They will lead you to a higher way. . . . You can study the religions of the world, the histories of the world, the art of the world, the history of the church. . . . You can do all of this. . . . It will inform your choices. . . It will solidify your core Christian beliefs. . . . It will give your life new purpose and new meaning. . . . It will give you direction for your life. . . . This is what my dad thought. These were the beliefs that my dad hoped his students would appropriate for their lives. . . .

My dad ate with his students, played with his students, debated with his students, prayed with his students, and even married many of his students! My dad simply loved all of his students and, in fact, if that meant driving halfway across the country during the height of the all-important berry picking season to marry them, he would gladly do it.[34]

It was precisely some of the characteristics identified above that troubled many in the constituency who felt that they alienated many students from the church and led some to abandon the faith entirely. For many, the idea that secular or worldly truth was compatible with Christianity was too threatening for young people and could lead to conflict in the church.

Krahn's final year was marked by relative internal harmony. The 1981–1982 academic year marked the end of an era in other respects besides the presidency. James Pankratz, who was responsible for the self-evaluation and who had been academic dean during the final years of the Krahn administration, submitted his resignation as dean and was granted a three-year leave of absence to accept an assignment with MCC in Bangladesh. He was asked to complete the report by the May 1983. Abe Dueck was reappointed as academic dean, a post he had left in 1978.

34. Val Krahn Pierce, "Reflections on Henry Krahn," unpublished manuscript in personal files of author.

10

Navigating a Middle Course: David Ewert, 1982–1988

The faculty was obviously very concerned about who might become the next MBBC president. David Ewert (1922–2010) soon emerged as the faculty favourite. The board also quickly focused on Ewert as the person who might best be able to re-establish the confidence of the conference. Ewert was now teaching at the seminary in Fresno, ten years after his troubled departure from MBBC. The board interviewed him at the January 1982 meetings and invited him to accept the position. Ewert was ready to return and agreed to the offer immediately.

Ewert's orientation and administrative style

Ewert, as indicated in earlier chapters, was well known in the constituency and had already spent much of his career at the college. His theological expertise, particularly as related to New Testament interpretation, had made him one of the most respected teachers at the college. Although some of his views, especially in relation to eschatology, had not been well received by some leaders and pastors, few dared give a substantial theological critique. His general theological orientation could probably best be described as "new evangelical" or "Evangelical Anabaptist." He did not interact a great deal with Mennonite scholars at other Mennonite institutions such as Goshen/Elkhart or CMBC, although he had spent three years teaching at Eastern Mennonite Seminary in Harrisonburg, Virginia, before beginning a term at the Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary.

Ewert did not speak much about his understanding of Anabaptism, which had been a contentious issue during both the Adrian administration and the Krahn administration. For Ewert, this was clearly not a focal concern. He strongly opposed some of the conservative or even

fundamentalist voices in the constituency. But he was also increasingly considered too conservative by some, especially by some of his younger colleagues. One significant example of this was his view of women in ministry leadership. This issue became very contentious over the next several decades and some of his former students and colleagues challenged the more conservative views that Ewert defended.[1]

David Ewert (MAID CMBS NP026-24-10)

Ewert's administrative skills had not been thoroughly tested, although he had served both as registrar and academic dean of MBBC in earlier years. He felt most comfortable preaching, giving lectures, and publishing articles in church-related periodicals and journals. His administration was markedly different from that of the Krahn era. Ewert was not interested in probing the broad conceptual issues pertaining to higher education or in seeking to articulate or promote MBBC's philosophy of education in the constituency. His approach to public relations was rather to preach and lecture in various venues, to write and to publish, and thereby to gain the confidence of the constituency. Invitations to preach came readily, which had not been the case for Krahn during his presidency. Internal administrative tasks were largely left to the academic dean, Abe Dueck, and to the business manager, Harry Olfert.

The vision statement that David Ewert presented to the board in January 1982 revealed a perspective that, in many ways, had more in common with the pre-1970s era than with the Krahn era. In his opening paragraph, Ewert stated that this was a "tentative vision statement" because he wanted it "to remain subject to correction and

1. See various essays in John E. Toews, Valerie Rempel, and Katie Funk Wiebe, eds., *Your Daughters Shall Prophesy: Women in Ministry in the Church* (Winnipeg, MB: Kindred Press, 1992); and Douglas Heidebrecht, *Women in Ministry Leadership: The Journey of the Mennonite Brethren, 1954–2010* (Winnipeg, MB: Kindred Productions, 2019).

new insight."[2] The statement had 12 points that focused on a broad range of issues, including service to the constituency, commitment to the church and its history and theology, working harmoniously with other schools, working with faculty in decision-making, and fostering good relations with students without becoming too "chummy," which could hinder correction and discipline. He also addressed his understanding of the nature and function of chapels, the role of public relations, and his desire to work harmoniously with the board. He did not feel the need to make any major changes to the academic curriculum.

Ewert's statement was not what would normally be defined as a vision or a mission statement, although it had elements of both and had implications for both. Parts of it were more like a strategic plan. But it did not clearly define a conceptual or philosophical framework or direction for the college. It did not address issues such as an Anabaptist worldview, integration of knowledge, or the relationship between Christianity and culture—concepts that Krahn had often addressed.

At the January 1982 meetings, Ewert presented a statement to the board entitled "Goal Priorities at MBBC." It consisted of 16 concisely worded goals. Interestingly, not one of the goals referred to the preparation of students for ministry in terms that alluded to the original purpose statement of the college. Rather, it referred to serving God in everyday living, fostering the use of abilities in effective ministry in the local church, promoting high standards of academic achievement, and "enabling students to examine significant issues of life through liberal arts studies within the context of a Christian community."[3] By this time, the professional ministry was well established in Canada, and the seminary in Fresno had become the main pastoral training institution for Mennonite Brethren. It is noteworthy that the goal statement made no reference to the preparation of preachers, missionaries, teachers, music directors, or other specialized ministries in the church and its institutions.

David Ewert was officially appointed as the new president at the July 1982 Mennonite Brethren convention in Three Hills, Alberta. The conference yearbook gives little detail about the proceedings related to the report and recommendations of the Board of Higher Education. But the reality was that controversy and suspicion were still rampant, even though most delegates were willing to give the new administration a chance.

2. "A Tentative Vision Statement," presented to the Board of Higher Education, 28–30 January 1982, Vol. 58, Fld. 6, CMBS, Winnipeg.

3. The statement does not indicate how it was generated, but faculty minutes suggest that it was generated by the faculty. See Faculty Council Minutes #15, 21 January 1982, Vol. 66, Fld. 15, CMBS, Winnipeg.

Institutional self-study

James Pankratz submitted a draft of the "Institutional Self-Study Report" prior to his departure at the board's annual meeting in Three Hills in July 1982. The completed report was submitted to the executive by Dean Abe Dueck at the September meeting. In an earlier statement, Pankratz had stated that the report would not indicate any major direction but would show "where we are."[4]

The self-study report documented and analyzed many issues, including vision, governance, faculty, students, alumni, academic program, and constituency relations. The analysis of the college's vision demonstrated the sometimes subtle changes that had taken place in previous decades. In particular, it demonstrated the difficulty of meeting the needs and expectations of the constituency on the one hand and of the students on the other hand. The statements in the college catalogues also did not necessarily coincide with the official statements accepted by the board, although they were intended to be consistent with them. While catalogue statements had been revised several times in the previous decade, the last vision statement of the board was the one that had been presented to the Council of Boards in 1973.

The statement of objectives in the 1979–1980 catalogue was revised. It listed three broad categories: 1) MBBC is a church-related college; 2) MBBC is university oriented; and 3) MBBC recognizes that God's truth has practical dimensions. Within these objectives, the statement included phrases such as "all truth is understood to have its origin in God" and "the life of Christian discipleship as central to the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition." Specific objectives included the need to "assist the student to understand Christian values as they relate to society at large."

The statement also referred to the importance of developing basic skills of communication and leadership for service in the church. Seven specific goals were listed. The only one that addressed preparing students for specialized ministries was goal six: "To develop in the student the basic skills of communication and leadership which can be used in the service of the church." In the section on academic program, however, it listed two purposes of the Bachelor of Religious Studies degree: 1) "to provide lay people with a strong basis for their own faith and with the tools to be involved in effective ministry within the church as well as within various vocations"; and 2) "to prepare students for more specialized church ministries such as pastoral work, foreign service, music,

4. Minutes of the Executive of the Board of Higher Education, 16–17 April 1982, Vol. 58, Fld. 6, CMBS, Winnipeg.

and education."[5] This, of course, did not necessarily apply to the large number of students who did not pursue an MBBC degree. The section on college credit toward university degrees did not specify a specific goal or purpose, although it was implied by more general objectives.

Pankratz summarized the findings of surveys of conference leaders, alumni, and students regarding their understandings of the purpose of the college. Whereas all three groups placed a high priority on Bible knowledge and understanding of the Christian faith, students placed a higher priority on general education (arts) than the other two groups did. The board also appointed an external review team that submitted its report in February 1983.[6] The report was divided into three major sections: 1) Administration, 2) Faculty/Academic Program, and 3) Student Life/Church Constituency. Each area contained brief sections on affirmations, concerns, and recommendations. There were multiple concerns and recommendations. The major ones dealt with the continuing ambiguity and confusion surrounding the role of the college in the educational context of the Mennonite Brethren conference. Others included the implementation of a better system of course and faculty evaluation, a better balance of program and faculty in terms of the stated vision of MBBC to create a "defensible centre," a termination of the tenure system in favour of term contracts for faculty, and a strengthening of community life with special attention to the integration of married and off-campus students.

The faculty engaged in a lengthy review[7] of the self-study. The study had essentially been the work of the academic dean, James Pankratz. The faculty assessments were not always in keeping with the report's findings. Some of the main issues of the faculty review of the self-study were the following: 1) the official vision statements were inadequate, even though the faculty was quite unified in its understanding of the goals of the college; 2) there was a major weakness in how the college expressed its unique identity; 3) the perception of the liberal arts continued to be very problematic; and 4) the impact of the university on the vision of the college was misunderstood.

President Ewert submitted a draft vision statement to the board in February 1983. The board asked him to revise, edit, and submit it to

5. *MBBC Catalogue*, 1979–1980, 29, Vol. 117, Fld. 4, CMBS, Winnipeg.

6. Board of Higher Education, 3–5 February 1983, Report #10, Vol. 58, Fld. 8, CMBS, Winnipeg.

7. Ibid., Faculty Report Concerning its Review of the Self Study of the Mennonite Brethren Bible College, Report #9.

the faculty for review.[8] The revised document was then sent to various conference leaders for comments and suggestions. In July, the board shared the revised statement with conference delegates as a "white study paper" and asked delegates to respond to it. The president was asked to provide a written report by early 1984 concerning the actions the college had taken related to the external team report. The board continued to refine the vision statement and then formally accepted it in 1984.[9] Concrete steps were taken during the next several years, focusing primarily on various revisions of the faculty handbook. These led to changes in internal governance, structures of evaluation and accountability, and other matters. It was not until October 1985 that a renewed general discussion took place regarding long-term goals and projections. At that time, the faculty and board members were encouraged to keep the vision statement in mind "since the conference had such a rich involvement in its design."[10]

The final vision statement consisted of four sections. 1) The history of MBBC. This section consisted of five brief paragraphs summarizing major developments since the founding of the college in 1944. 2) The theological context of education at MBBC. This section consisted of a summary of the Mennonite Brethren confession of faith and indicated the allegiance of the college to the confession. 3) The philosophy of education at MBBC. This section consisted of three paragraphs stating that the college is "committed to pursuing truth" in the context of understanding the world as God's creation" and "examining the fundamental questions of life and practice from this perspective." It affirmed that "there is no basic dichotomy between a Christian faith commitment and honest inquiry." In general terms, it expressed the need to nurture a "deep commitment to our Lord, the church, and His mandate of witness, discipleship, church growth, and world evangelism." The final paragraph placed the college in the "evangelical Anabaptist heritage of faith" where gifts are discerned and where both Christian community and individuality are honoured. 4) The objectives of education at MBBC. The final section listed 12 specific objectives of MBBC. These included such concepts as "increasing the knowledge of God," "interpreting the Bible," cultivating spiritual disciplines, nurturing loyalty to the local church, engaging in meaningful Christian community, integrating all aspects of life, communicating the faith, providing leadership, becoming

8. Board of Higher Education Minutes, 3–5 February 1983, Vol. 58, Fld. 8, CMBS, Winnipeg.

9. Board of Higher Education Minutes, 2–4 February 1984, Vol. 58, Fld. 10, CMBS, Winnipeg.

10. Minutes of the Executive of the Board of Higher Education, 6–7 October 1985, Vol. 58, Fld. 13, CMBS, Winnipeg.

knowledgeable in humanities, social sciences, and fine arts, entering vocational ministries in the church, pursuing further studies and vocations in society, and promoting obedience to the command "to make disciples of all nations."[11]

The philosophy and objectives of education that were spelled out in this vision statement were generally quite consistent with what had characterized the previous era under Krahn, although they were articulated in much greater detail. A comparison with the 1973 proposal concerning the role of MBBC reveals some interesting differences. The 1973 statement primarily addressed specific programs, such as the Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Religious Studies programs and the nature of the "core," whereas the 1984 vision statement did not refer to any specific programs and did not use "liberal arts" language. The 1973 proposal did not refer to vocational objectives at all.

Ultimately, while the final 1984 vision statement was much more specific in terms of objectives, it did not indicate any change of direction and left the ambiguity of the previous decades largely intact. The model it proposed was not that of seminary education, but neither was it a Christian liberal arts model, which was the only other clear option. This left the question of how the college was different from the Bible schools basically unanswered. Although the statement envisioned a small liberal arts component, this was not highlighted or central. It continued to try to cater to both elements in the constituency—those who were committed to the earlier Bible college model and those who promoted a shift toward a greater emphasis on liberal arts or even the development of a Christian liberal arts institution. In doing so, it risked not satisfying either group. A Christian liberal arts alternative would have provided a clear sense of direction and an identifiable constituency with good student potential. Instead, the college opted for continued ambiguity.

The task of promoting MBBC as a clear alternative in Christian education continued to be a major challenge for years to come. A consultation with conference leaders in fall 1982 indicated a desire for more emphasis on missions and evangelism, and reinforced the prevalent confusion about whether the college was a Bible college or an arts college.[12] Ewert repeated what his predecessors had frequently stated—that there was no major change in the objectives of the college since it was founded in 1944.

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11. Board of Higher Education, 2–4 February 1984, Report #11, Vol. 58, Fld. 10, CMBS, Winnipeg.

12. Board of Higher Education Minutes, 3–5 February 1983, Vol. 58, Fld. 8, CMBS, Winnipeg.

Student enrolment, which had declined since the peak enrolment of 1977–1978, increased substantially in Ewert's first year. Course enrolment increased to a new high of 1,338 course registrations, which meant that students were taking an average of 2.99 courses per semester.[13] This was the highest since 1976, but it still indicated that the challenge of creating community remained a serious issue.

A new college for a new century?

In the meantime, other broader developments were taking place. Discussions were taking place regarding the development of a Christian liberal arts college in Winnipeg, quite apart from the existing institutions. The main promoter was Dr. David Friesen, who had also been the key person in the establishment of the Chair in Mennonite Studies at the University of Winnipeg. The reports indicated that Friesen and associates were determined to establish such a college and had already secured an endowment of ten million dollars.[14] The process was underway to obtain a government charter, and the intent was not to affiliate the college with any particular Mennonite denomination. The board and faculty of MBBC appeared not to favour the development.

In June 1982, a lengthy document promoting a new college was released. It was written by Frank H. Epp, a prominent Mennonite leader and long-time editor of *The Canadian Mennonite*. Epp prepared the document for the "Friends of Higher Learning," which was a group chaired by Dr. David Friesen. The document was entitled "A New College for a New Century: The Wisdom of the Ages for the Crises of our Time."[15] As the title indicated, it was a bold proposal that sought to address the need for a new college as well as to provide a general outline of its possible shape. Epp had consulted with an advisory body that consisted of selected faculty from the various Mennonite institutions in Manitoba and faculty members from the two Winnipeg universities.

Although the MBBC board appeared not to favour the initiative for a new college and did not respond specifically to Epp's proposal, the executive passed the following motion:

> *That the Board of Higher Education continue to explore with Dr. Friesen and his associates a concept of further developing opportunities and facilities for higher Christian liberal arts and theological education in Canada. The board is interested*

13. See reports in *Mennonite Brethren Herald* (3 June 1983), 17–22.

14. Minutes of the Executive of the Board of Higher Education, 16–17 April 1982, Vol. 58, Fld. 6, CMBS, Winnipeg.

15. Board of Higher Education, 7–9 July 1982, Report #2, Vol. 58, Fld. 7, CMBS, Winnipeg.

in working further with these brethren and with colleagues at CMBC to explore needs in these areas and contribute to the formulation of alternative possible solutions to these needs.[16]

In 1982, the provisional board of the new college received a charter to establish Menno Simons College (MSC). However, progress was slow, and many were uncomfortable about how the initiative seemed to bypass the usual community processes. In February 1983, the provisional board met with representatives of three Mennonite conferences to discuss the proposal. The consensus at the end of the meeting was that there was little support for the new college, and, therefore, plans were put on hold.[17] More than a year later, however, an agreement was realized between the University of Winnipeg and the Dr. David Friesen Family Corporation to establish a Mennonite Studies Centre at the university. Concern was expressed about how this might affect MBBC, even though assurances were given that the curriculum would not duplicate the curriculum of the college. In April 1985, the board declined a request to appoint a member to the board of Menno Simons College. In October, however, the executive appointed Dean Abe Dueck as the representative on the planning committee of the Mennonite Studies Centre to "insure a minimum of conflict or competition."[18]

In time, Menno Simons College developed in ways that were perceived to have negative consequences for MBBC. Dueck was on study leave in fall 1986 and James Pankratz was acting dean. When Dueck returned, he discovered that meetings had taken place during his absence without MBBC representation and that there had been no formal consultations, even though assurances of such had been given.

Although the initial memorandum of agreement regarding the nature of the proposed college was quite general, it soon appeared that the assurances that had been given were not being honoured. The memorandum stated that MSC would not "duplicate in whole or in part" the curricula of the present colleges. Furthermore, the primary focus would be on honours courses and post-graduate teaching in Mennonite Studies. Finally, the memorandum spoke of MSC as an "affiliated" college. In 1970, when MBBC had become an associated college of the

16. Minutes of the Executive of the Board of Higher Education, 16–17 April 1982, Vol. 58, Fld. 6, CMBS, Winnipeg.

17. See "Menno Simons College on indefinite 'hold,'" *Mennonite Brethren Herald* (25 February 1983), 16; and Minutes of the Executive of the Board of Higher Education, 21–22 April 1983, Vol. 58, Fld. 8, CMBS, Winnipeg.

18. Minutes of the Executive of the Board of Higher Education, 6–7 October 1985, Vol. 58, Fld. 13, CMBS, Winnipeg.

University of Winnipeg, the term "associated" was used deliberately to avoid eligibility for funding, given the nature of the Universities Establishment Act of Manitoba. Now, it appeared that MSC would become eligible for government funding while MBBC and CMBC would continue to be denied.[19]

Chapel service at MBBC, 1982–1983 (MAID CMBS NP026-37-11)

In the meantime, the religious studies department at the University of Winnipeg was also registering concerns about their relationship with MBBC. They proposed that the religious studies courses at MBBC become part of a separate religious studies department. The present relationship, they argued, was too complicated and the enrolment at MBBC had become too large to be part of their department. The MBBC "tail was wagging the U of W dog." The MBBC faculty had reservations about such an arrangement, feeling that it might have implications for how courses were weighed by other universities.[20]

Despite many uncertainties that still surrounded the college community, the enrolment for the 1983–1984 academic year was encouraging with a total of 271 students enrolled in January and a full-time equivalent of 205, an increase of over 20%.[21] The following year, however, enrolment showed a significant decrease again.[22]

19. See letter by Dean Dueck to Ian McDougal, Chair in Mennonite Studies Centre Planning Committee, detailing the concerns of the college and board, 16 June 1987, Vol. 59, Fld. 1, CMBS, Winnipeg.

20. Minutes of Faculty Council, 28 February 1986, Vol. 66, Fld. 18, CMBS, Winnipeg.

21. Board of Higher Education Minutes, 2–4 February 1984, Vol. 58, Fld. 10, CMBS, Winnipeg.

22. Board of Higher Education Minutes, 31 January–3 February 1985, Vol. 58, Fld. 12, CMBS,

Inter-institutional relationships in the Ewert era

The inter-school consultation that was held in October 1982 revealed the usual preoccupation with fragmentation. While some of the concerns focused on the fact that many students were attending non-Mennonite Brethren institutions and that pastors needed to direct young people to Mennonite Brethren schools, the impact of regional loyalties and the concern for accreditation was also noted. The representatives agreed to work on a policy of accreditation between MBBC and the Bible institutes.[23]

Discussions began with Institute Biblique Laval in Quebec regarding affiliation with MBBC, and an agreement was approved by the board in July 1986. In 1984, Dean Dueck presented a paper to the board entitled "Bible Institute's Accreditation."[24] The paper was circulated to all the Bible institutes with the encouragement to pursue further dialogue with them as well as with the university to facilitate credit for Bible school transfers.

In July 1984, the board met with the Board of Spiritual and Social Concerns to discuss a draft statement on "Fragmentation and Regionalization in our Education Institutions in Canada."[25] The statement characterized the history of Mennonite Brethren education in Canada as one that was based on the "long understanding" of the tiered structure of education, with high schools, Bible schools, the college, and the seminary each dealing with different levels. On this basis, the obvious question was how the Bible institutes could upgrade without "destroying this carefully constructed balance of education in Canada." While there were both positive and negative aspects to the regionalization trend, it tended to develop a set of understandings that made "co-operation with the larger unit frequently difficult." The fragmentation that accompanied strong regionalization resulted in increasing enrolment at non-denominational schools and the calling of ministers from these schools. Many leaders supported these schools to the exclusion of Mennonite Brethren schools. The conference needed to address these issues, it argued.

In November 1984, the board met with members of the Columbia Bible Institute board regarding new developments at the school. The

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Winnipeg.

23. Board of Higher Education, 3–5 February 1983, Report #6, Vol. 58, Fld. 8, CMBS, Winnipeg.

24. Board of Higher Education, 2–4 February 1984, Report #7, Vol. 58, Fld. 10, CMBS, Winnipeg.

25. Board of Higher Education, 26–27 April 1984, Report #5, Vol. 58, Fld. 10, CMBS, Winnipeg.

survey of British Columbia churches had demonstrated the need for more church workers who were trained in Mennonite Brethren Bible schools. As a result, the following recommendations were prepared by the Columbia Bible Institute board,[26] ones scheduled for presentation to the British Columbia supporting constituency: 1) to seek accreditation with AABC, 2) to seek a charter to allow Columbia Bible Institute to grant theological degrees, 3) to add an expanded third year to the curriculum, and 4) to seek approval for a Bachelor of Theology program beginning in 1985. A lengthy discussion took place that revealed considerable concern by college board members about the perceptions of MBBC, which had become part of the rationale for the proposed changes. The college board felt these perceptions were not based on reality.

At the Council of Boards meetings in January/February 1985, another statement by the MBBC board[27] identified four specific issues: 1) the challenge to the tiered structure of education represented by Columbia Bible Institute's intent to move to a four-year degree-granting status, 2) the resulting fragmentation that had negative effects on the larger unit, 3) the impact on the resource base if Columbia Bible Institute and Bethany Bible Institute both should become colleges, and 4) the need for a radical revision of the financing formula. "If regional areas take over functions that once belonged at another level, it will tend to re-allocate funds previously designated elsewhere," it stated. Once again, the statement by the board called for intensive dialogue.

At the same meeting, Dean Dueck presented a proposal regarding Bible school accreditation that had been prepared in consultation with the University of Winnipeg. A limited transfer policy was approved by the University of Winnipeg in 1986, but this did not prove sufficient to resolve the issues. A consultation with about 35 participants was convened on the Columbia Bible Institute campus on 8–9 November 1985.[28] The theme was "Conference Unity and Higher Education." The report on the consultation by the inter-school relations committee was not very encouraging.[29] Although the group agreed that higher education was a national issue, the report stated that "regional institutions are quite protective of their turf." Several Bible institutes were likely to seek Bible

26. Board of Higher Education, 1–4 November 1984, Reports #8–10, Vol. 58, Fld. 11, CMBS, Winnipeg.

27. See Working Copy #3, Further discussion on the Fragmentation/Regionalization Question, Board of Higher Education, 31 January–3 February 1985, Vol. 58, Fld. 12, CMBS, Winnipeg.

28. Board of Higher Education, Report #8, January 30–February 1, 1986, Vol. 58, Fld. 14, CMBS, Winnipeg.

29. Ibid.

college status within the next two years, it stated, and this would make it increasingly difficult to maintain a Bible college at the national level. Resources were inadequate to maintain three or four colleges in Canada.

Renewed attempts to offer graduate theological training

On another front, in April 1984, the board approved a motion to explore the development of a relationship with the biblical seminary in Fresno. Specifically, this called for a possible first-year seminary program at MBBC. After more than ten years, MBBC was again seeking to offer graduate theological education! This initially resulted in an agreement to transfer some selected course credits to the seminary in Fresno. Attempts to negotiate a more formal one-year satellite program in the next several years were not successful. MBBC continued to feel squeezed at both ends of the institutional continuum.

In April 1986, the executive received a letter from Edwin Friesen, secretary of the Evangelical Mennonite Conference, that expressed interest in a cooperative venture in seminary education. The board responded positively to this and encouraged the college to "actively advertise our offering of year one of seminary training."[30] It reviewed a discussion paper relating to a possible one-year Master of Arts (MA) degree at its annual July meeting.[31] Discussions were also underway for cooperative pastoral training on an inter-Mennonite basis.

In July 1986, Dueck reported on a consultation with representatives of six Mennonite denominations in Canada (Conference of Mennonites in Canada, Mennonite Church, Evangelical Mennonite Conference, Evangelical Mennonite Mission Conference, Chortitzer Mennonite Conference, and Mennonite Brethren) where the need for higher theological education in Canada was identified as a major concern. The board encouraged further discussions and also recommended that MBBC advertise the current one-year seminary program offered at MBBC. Dueck reported on discussions pertaining to a cooperative venture between various institutions in Winnipeg in relation to the Master of Divinity (MDiv) program offered by the theology department at the University of Winnipeg (a United Church training program). A draft constitution for the Winnipeg Theological Consortium was presented to the board in January 1987, but no formal action was taken.

30. Minutes of the Executive of the Board of Higher Education, 24–26 April 1986, Vol. 58, Fld. 14, CMBS, Winnipeg.

31. Board of Higher Education, Report #6, 2–4 July 1986, Vol. 58, Fld. 15, CMBS, Winnipeg.

Renewed internal tensions

In the meantime, some difficulties were emerging regarding faculty appointments and the perceptions by faculty that unfavourable changes were taking place at the college. Criticism was expressed in letters from students and in board interactions with faculty and students.[32] The minutes stated that letters expressed concerns about the "cancellation of a *College Bulletin* issue, a philosophical shift in administration, and the evaluation and dismissal of Eric Mierau." Mierau, who was first appointed in 1980, was a graduate of MBBC and had a PhD degree in anthropology from Indiana University. He had served as a translation consultant for the American Bible Society in Nigeria and as a Spanish instructor in Jamaica. He served on the faculty as registrar and as assistant professor of contemporary ministries. In addition to his teaching responsibilities, he was responsible for the annual mission conference.

Aspects of Mireau's perspective and performance came under severe criticism, particularly regarding his views on missions and evangelism and his view of native spirituality. His relationship with the president became increasingly conflictual and the process of review for reappointment became mired in controversy. The board opted to extend his teaching appointment for a year and selected a review committee to report by January 1984. After the review was completed, the board unanimously decided not to renew Mierau's appointment beyond June 1985. The decision caused considerable faculty concern. This resulted in a review of the process at the January 1985 board meetings. However, the board reaffirmed its decision while admitting that the process had not been entirely appropriate. It appealed for reconciliation and healing. Some faculty members were unhappy with the president's role in the process. The board completed its first review of the president at the January 1985 meeting, the same meeting that dealt with Mierau's status. It affirmed Ewert's reappointment for a further three-year term.

Some of the faculty concerns regarding the revised faculty handbook policies were presented to the board. One concern was that faculty council was largely bypassed when personnel issues were presented to the board. The board made some further revisions, but faculty concerns regarding recent developments created increasing distrust and tension. Some felt that the role of faculty council had gradually diminished under the new administration and that board decisions were often made without adequate input by faculty. In particular, it had become clear that the departure of Eric Mierau had divided the faculty. Some faculty members

32. Board of Higher Education Minutes, 3–5 July 1984, Vol. 58, Fld. 11, CMBS, Winnipeg.

also felt insecure or unsure about continuing at MBBC. Furthermore, although Krahn had fully endorsed Ewert as the new president and appeared initially to support him, it became more and more obvious that not only was there a personality clash, but the worldview and vision of the two were quite incompatible. Krahn had fostered a close working relationship with most of the faculty, whereas Ewert did not foster that to the same extent. Faculty members felt torn between loyalty to one or the other. The faculty realized the continuing fragility of the college and was aware of the potentially negative impact that another crisis might have on the credibility of the institution.

Strongly held differences of opinion and perspectives between individuals within faculty council and in committees such as the personnel committee took place with increasing frequency. The general atmosphere within faculty, staff, administration, and students deteriorated. Then, suddenly, a new and unexpected tragic event brought the crisis to a head. On 9 December 1985, during a difficult exchange at a personnel committee meeting, Krahn was struck by a heart attack. He did not regain consciousness and died a short time later. His funeral took place on 13 December in the Elmwood Mennonite Brethren Church. He was only 62 years of age. This was a blow for which no one could have been prepared. It proved to be very difficult to recover from such a tragic turn of events. Very little information was made available to the public about the circumstances surrounding Krahn's death. The *Herald* only carried a brief notice of his passing,[33] followed by a standard obituary.[34] Under usual circumstances, a longer tribute might have been expected; however, the only such tribute was carried in the *Mennonite Mirror* and was written by Harry Loewen, Chair in Mennonite Studies.[35]

The circumstances of Krahn's passing were very painful for President Ewert, who had found it increasingly difficult to work with Krahn and some other faculty. Before the end of the year, Sig Polle resigned from the faculty, prompted largely by the circumstances that prevailed, including the dismissal of Eric Mierau. Polle was student dean, in addition to teaching some courses. Two faculty letters dated 19 December were entered into the faculty minutes—one addressed to Mierau and the other to President Ewert. They expressed concern about actions and statements made by each. They also expressed ongoing care and support for Eric, affirmation and appreciation for the ministry and

33. "Henry Krahn passes away suddenly," *Mennonite Brethren Herald* (13 December 1985), 12.
34. *Mennonite Brethren Herald* (31 March 1986), 30.
35. "A tribute to Henry George Krahn," *Mennonite Mirror* (January 1986), 26.

dedication of Ewert, and a commitment to work with him in rebuilding trust.

The board—led by the chair, Harry Heidebrebreht—met for the first time following this tragedy at the end of January 1986. The dean reported on interim arrangements to replace Henry Krahn. A scholarship was established to honour Krahn, named the "Henry G. Krahn Memorial Scholarship." It was designated for students with outstanding academic achievement in history. At the same meeting, the board grappled with a proposed reduction in the conference grant and sought to mitigate the effect by reducing expenditures and identifying other potential sources of revenue, including government subsidies.

While MBBC was contemplating expansion by offering seminary courses, the constituency continued to express lack of confidence in the college. At the orientation sessions in late August, Ewert shared concerns about reports that students were confused about their life of faith and about the college's theology. Faculty spent considerable time seeking to understand the reasons for the criticisms and discussing the need to be pastoral toward students and declaring their Christian convictions more clearly in their interactions with students.[36] Doug Schulz, who was appointed registrar and admissions counsellor in 1985 and was a graduate of MBBC, made extensive recruitment visits to Alberta, British Columbia, and Ontario in October and November 1985.

In lengthy reports, Schultz indicated that the visit to British Columbia was fairly positive, although there was criticism and concern about the "spiritual vitality" at MBBC. At Columbia Bible Institute, his reception was cordial but cool. However, his Ontario experience was less positive. "I am afraid," he stated, "that the bulk of my report will have to focus on the 'baptism by fire' I received from the Niagara area pastors on Monday morning." The theology at MBBC was perceived as "liberal" (questions of scriptural authority and authorship, divinity of Christ, etc.). The general attitude at MBBC was negatively disposed toward the churches and toward the Bible schools, the pastors charged. The lifestyle of students was worldly and characterized by general permissiveness (dancing, open dorm visits between men and women). Finally, the leaders felt that MBBC had abandoned its role of preparing students for ministry.[37] The faculty resolved to try to create a better understanding of the true reality at MBBC and to make positive changes, but they seemed

36. Faculty Council Minutes #1, 26–27 August 1985, Vol. 64, Fld. 3, CMBS, Winnipeg.

37. See Faculty Council Minutes #4, 1 November 1985, and #5, 21 November 1985, Vol. 64, Fld. 3, CMBS, Winnipeg.

MBBC faculty, 1986–1987. Front row (l-r): Abe Dueck, Irmgard Baerg, Bill Baerg, David Ewert, Esther Wiens, Gordon Matties, and Doug Schulz. Back row: John Martens, Isaac Block, James Pankratz, John Regehr, Harry Olfert, George Shillington, Herb Giesbrecht, and Linda Schwartz-Trivett. (MAID CMBS NP026-23-04)

somewhat uncertain about how to bring about fundamental change in MBBC's relationship to a divided constituency.

Exploring new program options

In October 1986, the faculty held a forum on MBBC's goals, programs, and distinctives. The usual questions were raised and discussed: Should MBBC offer a BA degree or an MA degree in church ministries? Should MBBC offer a four-year degree program? The consensus was that MBBC should offer three-year as well as a four-year BRS degrees. The four-year degree should contain enough liberal arts courses to qualify a student for a BA degree (granted by the University of Winnipeg). The faculty listed several distinctives that they felt characterized MBBC. These included the number of faculty with a doctoral degree, the percentage of BA accredited courses, the cultural context of MBBC, the advanced music program, and the location of the archival centre within the MBBC complex.[38]

A month later, the faculty discussed a proposal by the faculty of theology at the University of Winnipeg regarding the development of a ministry program offered by a cluster of colleges in Winnipeg (MBBC, Canadian Nazarene College, CMBC, and the University of Winnipeg). This program could grow into a full MDiv degree program. The faculty expressed some reservations, feeling that the Mennonite Brethren constituency might not appreciate such a cooperative venture and its implications for the seminary program in Fresno.[39]

In September 1987, there was a further smaller decline to 511 full-course equivalents. Not only was there a decline, but enrolment was increasingly shifting to Manitoba, indicating that loyalty to the college was becoming more and more regionalized.

Campus expansion

A major building project for a new dining hall (Project '84) was underway at this time under the leadership of Harry Olfert, campus administrator, whose untiring efforts resulted in significant new developments that dramatically improved the physical facilities. Olfert's efforts were deeply appreciated, particularly by Ewert. Ewert could devote himself to teaching and preaching without carrying major administrative functions relating to finance, campus development, and aspects of constituency relations.

38. Faculty Council Minutes #7, 24 October 1986, Vol. 66, Fld. 18a, CMBS, Winnipeg.
39. Faculty Council Minutes #9, 14 November 1986, Vol. 66, Fld. 18a, CMBS, Winnipeg.

The Project '84 building that housed the new dining hall was completed by early 1985 and also served various tenants relating to the operations of the Mennonite Brethren conference. College administrative offices were moved to the second floor of the former Unruh Memorial Building and student activity areas to the lower level of the new building. Before Project '84 was completed, plans were already developing for Project '85, which was an attempt to improve student housing. This eventually resulted in the renovation of Eben-Ezer Hall, which was renamed the C. A. DeFehr Residence. Another residential improvement was made with the renovation of the Mighton Apartments, located on Henderson Highway, north of the main campus. In 1987, another major project was undertaken—a gymnasium that would allow MBBC students to enjoy recreational activities and compete more fully in inter-college athletic programs. A recreational program was projected to be added to the curriculum.

Preparing for another transition

President Ewert's retirement was now rapidly approaching. In 1986, the board began the process of finding a new president. A search committee was appointed at the April executive committee meetings, and criteria and procedures were established. In January 1987, a short list was presented, and the board approved contacting several candidates on a priority basis. In March, James Pankratz presented his vision statement to the board, and, in April, the board unanimously agreed to appoint him as president for a three-year term beginning in June 1988.[40] He affirmed the earlier vision statement that had been accepted by the board and highlighted aspects that were particularly applicable to his understanding of the role of the president.

In January 1987, the board decided to begin a five-year planning process to chart the direction of the college during that period, to anticipate factors that might impact the college, to determine the best use of resources, and to evaluate the college's effectiveness. The college continued to feel uncertainty at various levels and lacked the full confidence of its constituency. The Three Hills convention in July stirred up the flames of controversy to a new high. A faculty member, George Shillington, made some comments concerning the German theologian, Rudolf Bultmann, although he clearly stated his disagreement with

40. Minutes of the Executive of the Board of Higher Education, 23–24 April 1987, Vol. 58, Fld. 16, CMBS, Winnipeg. The recommendation accepted by the conference in July did not specify a term.

Bultmann on principle issues. Strong criticism was voiced from the floor as well as by the Board of Spiritual and Social Concerns. Shillington was forced to explain that he had not meant to endorse Bultmann's theology as a whole and that he was, indeed, "a Mennonite." But damage had been done and other voices spoke up, criticizing the college.[41] The subsequent report in the *Herald*, written by James Coggins, opened with the statement: "The best and worst of the MB Bible College was evident in the presentations of the Board of Higher Education." The best, he stated, was proclaimed in the music and worship of the college, whereas the worst was related to the statements made by Shillington. The board later met with Coggins because his report was deemed offensive to the college. These issues and others made it obvious that the presidency of James Pankratz would not begin on a high note.

The board received a letter from the Board of Spiritual and Social Concerns (BSSC) later in the year, requesting a joint meeting with the board and the MBBC faculty. The meeting was to discuss the "theological direction of MBBC and faculty."[42] This request was not received favourably by the college board because of the content of the concern and because BSSC was seen as interfering in matters that were not part of its jurisdiction. As a result, the requested meeting was cancelled. Trust between the two boards appeared to be breaking down. The two boards finally agreed to meet for an open discussion on 30 January 1988. Harry Heidebrecht opened the discussion by encouraging participants to speak the truth in love. A long list of issues, both positive and negative, focused the discussions. Negative issues included the faculty's view of the Scriptures and methods of interpreting them. Some were concerned about how faculty was dealing with questions of authorship, canonicity, and about the methods of "higher criticism." Others focused on the spiritual struggles of students, the lack of adequate emphasis on evangelism and mission, the understanding of conversion, the perception that graduates did not communicate in the language of the people, and the perception that the college was increasingly becoming a liberal arts institution. Although no clear consensus on issues was reached, the participants agreed that there needed to be better communication at all levels.[43]

In the meantime, the conference struggled with several broader

41. "Three Hills '87," *Mennonite Brethren Herald* (7 August 1987), 9.

42. Minutes of the Executive of the Board of Higher Education, 15–16 October 1987, Vol. 59, Fld. 1, CMBS, Winnipeg.

43. Board of Higher Education Minutes, 28–30 January 1988, Vol. 59, Fld. 2, CMBS, Winnipeg.

issues relating to conference structure and the nature of the educational program in Canada. A revised conference structure was accepted at the July 1987 convention, but the only important change affecting the Board of Higher Education was that responsibility for IBL was transferred to the Board of Higher Education from the Board of Evangelism.[44]

A task force on higher education was established following the November 1985 consultation of several boards. The mandate was outlined as follows: 1) evaluate the postsecondary needs of the Canadian conference (nationally and regionally); 2) assess the present option and resources; 3) suggest possible options to meet the needs of the conference; and 4) prepare proposals and recommendations for the future, with supporting rationale.[45]

In its report to the convention in July 1987, the task force identified eight compelling issues, including theological and polity fragmentation, attendance at non-Mennonite Brethren schools, declining student potential, escalating costs, and regional loyalties.[46] Four recommendations of the task force were accepted by the delegates, including the following: 1) that a comprehensive coordinated system of higher education in Canada be adopted; 2) that a commission on higher education be appointed to develop operational guidelines for the new system of higher education; 3) that the terms of reference include developing a new governance structure, exploring program articulation among institutions, developing a national vision for biblical education, articulating institutional programs, developing student recruitment policies, and establishing a national funding formula; and 4) that a new national Board of Higher Education be elected at the 1988 convention.[47]

By January 1988, the three-member commission presented an interim report.[48] Board members engaged in intense dialogue about the possible implications of the proposal for MBBC and noted several serious concerns. Incoming president, James Pankratz, also presented a long-range planning procedure proposal that was endorsed by the board.[49] However, this procedure was never fully implemented because attention was now focused on the outcome of the commission proposal.

A meeting with representatives of the Board of Faith and Life (the new name for the Board of Spiritual and Social Concerns) during the

44. *Yearbook: Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, 76th Convention* (1987), 26.
45. Ibid., 11 ff.
46. Ibid., 13–14.
47. Ibid., 17–19.
48. Board of Higher Education Minutes, 28–30 January 1988, Vol. 59, Fld. 2, CMBS, Winnipeg.
49. Ibid., Report #6.

January session revealed a level of distrust that had developed between the two boards. During the open discussion, a series of 23 points were listed.[50] Foremost among the concerns were issues like authorship of the Scriptures, canonicity, hermeneutics, spirituality, understanding of conversion, and the role of liberal arts. There was also the perception that the college faculty was not communicating in a language understood by lay people.

Prior to the 1988 convention, board chair Harry Heidebrecht sent a letter to board members listing concerns communicated to him by Herb Neufeld, Canadian conference moderator and pastor of the Willingdon Mennonite Brethren Church. Five specific areas of concern were summarized: 1) The impact of university accreditation that was diverting students from ministry courses. The emphasis at the college was therefore on academics and the college was essentially a liberal arts college. 2) There was suspicion about the faculty at the college. MBBC had become "liberalized." Faculty were perceived as "neo-orthodox" rather than "conservative" in theology. Their view of the Scriptures and the nature of conversion was suspect. 3) The academic approach to issues left students confused and disloyal to the church. 4) Student life reflected a lack of discipline and control. Social drinking was tolerated, and sexual ethics were not clearly defined. 5) College constituency relations efforts often created distrust and a distancing from the constituency.[51]

The task force presented a detailed proposal for a new approach to higher education in the Canadian conference in July 1988 convention.[52] The board discussed the possible implications of the plan. James Pankratz gave a report that identified major concerns and suggestions for changes. [53] The board also discussed the issues with the conference executive and the specially appointed education commission prior to the convention. By all accounts, the plan was a very bold plan that would have far-reaching consequences for the future of Christian education for Mennonite Brethren in Canada.

The basic proposal involved a radical change in the governance structure and financing of MBBC. It proposed the formation of a Canadian Board of Advanced Education that would call a convention of

50. Ibid., Report on joint meeting with Board of Faith and Life and Board of Higher Education.

51. Board of Higher Education, 6–8 July 1988, Report #12, Report to Board of Higher Education, 23 June 1988, Vol. 59, Fld. 3, CMBS, Winnipeg.

52. "The Proposed Comprehensive, Coordinated System of Higher Education," *Yearbook: Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, 77th Convention* (1988), 70–79.

53. Board of Higher Education, Report #2, 3 September—1 October July 1988, Vol. 59, Fld. 3, CMBS, Winnipeg.

Mennonite Brethren church members from across Canada. This MBBC convention would continue for a transitional period from 1989 to 1994 and would form a governing body. During this transitional period, the MBBC convention would develop a permanent governance, funding, and accountability structure. Very little change was recommended for the four Bible institutes/colleges in Canada.

Incredibly, all recommendations were accepted without major changes at the July convention. The final step was to submit the report and recommendations to the six provincial conferences for their approval in order for the plan to be implemented. A path for the future of MBBC seemed to be within grasp. Would MBBC find new life as a national institution?

11

The Final Years of MBBC: James Pankratz, 1988–1992

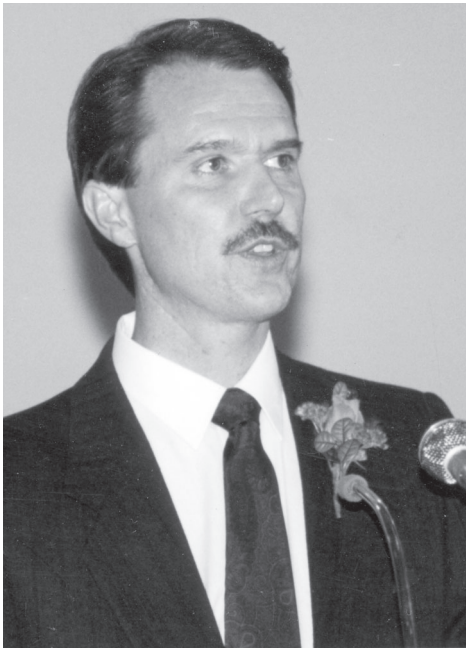
James Pankratz (1946–) was already a seasoned faculty member and administrator at MBBC by the time he began his term as president. He was first appointed on a part-time basis in 1975 before joining the regular faculty and serving as academic dean from 1978–1982. He was granted a leave of absence to serve a term under MCC in Bangladesh from 1982–1985, after which he returned as a faculty member until his appointment as president. He received his PhD degree at McMaster University in religious studies, specializing in Indian religions. He was director of two summer programs of the Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute. Pankratz was articulate and had earned the trust of the faculty and much of the Canadian Mennonite Brethren constituency.

Efforts to retain a national educational institution

During the 1988–1989 year, the board and president of MBBC engaged in intense efforts to secure the support of each of the provinces in advance of their conventions in early 1989. At first, it appeared that the efforts might be successful. The provinces east of British Columbia all approved the proposal at their conventions with a substantial majority.[1]

As was anticipated, the major question was how the British Columbia conference would respond to the proposal. At the October 1988 board meeting, Pankratz referred to a letter from the Willingdon Mennonite Brethren Church that criticized MBBC on several issues. The letter raised concerns about program and course content, university relationship, music, unsettling experiences of students, and the designation of donations. Willingdon was the largest church in British Columbia, and, therefore, this did not bode well for the upcoming decision in that

1. See "New directions for higher education," *Mennonite Brethren Herald* (23 June 1989), 17–19.



James Pankratz (MAID CMBS NP026-22-14)

province. British Columbia represented about one-half of the college constituency, and, as such, its decision was critical. It was the last of the provincial conventions to respond to the proposal. The British Columbia conference convened from 9–11 June 1989, only a month prior to the Canadian convention in Richmond, British Columbia. The executive of the British Columbia conference, the British Columbia Board of Reference and Counsel, and the executive of the Columbia Bible College board recommended against the proposal. They cited various problems. In the final analysis, the plan and funding formula were "soundly rejected."[2] The British Columbia constituency strongly favoured regionalization rather than nationalization of education.

In response, the executive of the Canadian conference recommended that the conference approve the principle of regionalization and that funding for MBBC be phased out within three years. This was a crushing blow! How could MBBC recover? What was its future?

Another institutional development that had been in process for a number of years came to fruition at about the time that Pankratz began his tenure as president. On 30 May 1988, the board of regents of the University of Winnipeg approved the affiliation of Menno Simons College (MSC) with the university. It postulated three academic programs: 1) Mennonite Studies to be developed in cooperation with the Chair in Mennonite Studies, 2) Conflict Resolution Studies, and 3) Studies in Social and Economic Development.

MSC was to be governed by an inter-Mennonite board of directors. This development once again prompted considerable discussion and concern. Not only was there potential overlap of the curriculum, such as Mennonite studies, but the establishment of another institution

2. Ibid.

meant that there would be more competition for students and financial resources.

The presidency of James Pankratz, which began almost a year before the critical British Columbia conference decision, did not begin on a positive note. Enrolment in 1988–1989 (147 FTE) was similar to the previous year but declined noticeably in 1989–1990 to 113 FTE. Increasingly, MBBC was becoming a school of part-time students, with only 93 of 215 students registered as full-time in 1988–1989 (three or more courses). In 1989, there were 86 full-time students out of a total enrolment of 172.

The quest for a regional education program

Time was running out for MBBC. A series of critical meetings took place in the following months. On 27 September 1989, the first consultation on higher education was held. Participants included the Canadian conference executive, provincial conference executives, and the chairs of the three institutional boards (Columbia, Bethany, Winkler), but without administrative representatives of any of the institutions. The purpose was to explore various options for the future of education in Canada. Many different options were discussed without a clear indication of which might be favoured. The executive of the Canadian conference was asked to develop several options for MBBC and to develop a proposal for approval on 31 January 1990. This was then to be submitted to the provinces for their consideration. A special session of the Canadian conference would be called to ratify the proposal.[3]

At the executive meeting of the Board of Higher Education in September 1989, Pankratz submitted a paper entitled "Governance of Post-secondary Education among Canadian Mennonite Brethren."[4] In essence, it presented a model in which British Columbia would have its own program of education, and the rest of Canada would develop another program. There would be no national program. MBBC was scrambling to keep ahead of the rapidly changing situation.

On 5 December, the executive of the Canadian conference sent a document to provincial and institutional representatives entitled "Canadian M.B. Higher Education: Scenarios for Change." The three options it listed were essentially as follows: 1) That MBBC become a regional college of Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario; that

3. See Minutes of the Executive of the Board of Higher Education, Report #5, 28–29 September 1989, Vol. 59, Fld. 5, CMBS, Winnipeg.

4. Ibid., Report #6.

Winkler Bible Institute and Bethany Bible Institute merge into one institution; and that a one-year Capernwray-type school be formed. 2) That Winkler Bible Institute be closed, and its program be introduced at MBBC. Manitoba would accept funding and governance of MBBC. 3) That MBBC, Bethany Bible Institute, and Winkler Bible Institute be blended into one new institution on the MBBC campus with a new faculty. The four provinces east of British Columbia would accept responsibility for the school.[5] The conference executive indicated that it favoured the third option.

MBBC men's soccer team, 1988–1989. Front row (l-r): Dan Balzer, Mike Hubert, Darryl Shoemaker, Barry Guenther, Dave Wagner, and Mark Bartel. Back row (l-r): Brad Neufeld, David Balzer, Arnold Bueckert, Karl Janzen, Paul Heidebrecht, Byron Koop, Alex Schulz, and Konrad Neufeld. (MAID CMBS NP026-43-35)

In response, the Board of Higher Education convened a special telephone conference on 28 December 1989. None of the options were unanimously favoured by the board. Option one was considered most desirable, whereas the third option was considered the least desirable.[6]

Two days later, a second consultation on the future of higher education was convened to discuss the options and prepare a recommendation. Present were the conference executive, the provincial moderators and some assistant moderators and secretaries, the chairs of Winkler Bible Institute and Bethany Bible Institute, the conference

5. Copy on file with the Board of Higher Education Minutes, 28 December 1989, Vol. 59, Fld. 6, CMBS, Winnipeg.

6. Minutes of the Special Telephone Conference of the Board of Higher Education, 28 December 1989, Vol. 59, Fld. 6, CMBS, Winnipeg.

minister, and several members of the Board of Higher Education, including James Pankratz (observer participant). The various options were discussed at length. The second option was soon dismissed, but there was considerable disagreement about the other two. The Canadian executive recommended that MBBC, Winkler, and Bethany be closed and that a new school be opened on the MBBC campus. There was a strong sense by some that the Bible institutes were becoming the "sacrificial lamb" in the process.[7] A paper prepared by Art DeFehr entitled "Some Thoughts on a Strategy for MB Higher Education" was also distributed but not formally discussed.[8]

MBBC music/drama tour group, 1988–1989. Sitting on the floor (l-r): Naomi Redekop and Brad Thiessen. Middle row: Elizabeth Schellenberg, Ruth Dyck, Peter Wohlgemut, Ed Buller, and Jennifer Friesen (on stool). Back row (l-r): Linda Schwartz-Trivett (faculty), Jody Neumann, Art Koop, Marvin Pankratz, Mark Wiebe, Janice Krahn, Gerry Ediger (faculty), and Esther Wiens (faculty). (MAID CMBS NP026-51-15)

Nothing conclusive emerged from this meeting.[9] However, it appeared that the onus was now on whether the four provincial conferences east of British Columbia were willing to accept MBBC as their school. The provincial executives, other than Ontario, met on 6 January to discuss a further course of action. After lengthy debates, a

7. Summary of Meeting of Canadian Conference Executive Committee, 30 December 1989, Vol. 59, Fld. 6, CMBS, Winnipeg.

8. Art DeFehr's proposal is attached to Secretary Menno Martens correspondence with Moderator Herb Neufeld, 5 December 1989, Vol. 59, Fld. 6, CMBS, Winnipeg.

9. See "Consultation on Higher Education: Scenarios for Change," *Mennonite Brethren Herald* (12 January 1990), 16–17.

proposal was unanimously approved. Once again, the first step was to establish a study commission consisting of three members from each of the four provinces. This commission's mandate was essentially as follows: 1) to articulate a vision for Mennonite Brethren higher education in the region, 2) to make recommendations regarding the number and nature of institutions, and 3) to develop a governance and funding plan.[10]

The provincial executives met with the Canadian conference executive on 1 February 1990 and submitted the following proposal: 1) That the concept of regional governance and funding of Mennonite Brethren post-secondary educational institutions in Canada be accepted. 2) That the Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta provincial conferences be asked to accept responsibility for determining the future of Bethany and Winkler Bible Institutes and MBBC. 3) That a new commission be established with three members from each of the above participating provincial conferences and a single member each from Quebec, British Columbia, and the Canadian conference executive committee. This commission would report to the Canadian executive board and to the provincial conventions in 1991. The outcome of this process would be reported with appropriate recommendations to the Canadian convention in July 1991. 4) That assurance be given to all students entering a program at MBBC in 1990–1991 and in 1991–1992 that they would be able to complete a minimum of a three-year program at MBBC.[11] This proposal, supported by the Council of Boards, was given to encourage and support the ongoing activities at MBBC during this period of study.

The proposal was accepted by the Council of Boards on 3 February 1990. The Canadian conference did not convene a convention in 1990. Despite the ongoing uncertainty, student enrolment during 1990–1991 actually increased to 102 full-time and 99 part-time, probably partly due to a vigorous recruitment strategy. Of these, 25 were enrolled in graduate studies. The largest increase of students came from Manitoba. But in the fall of 1991–1992, the enrolment declined once again with 97 full-time and 58 part-time students for total of 120 FTE.

The recommendations were presented to the provincial conferences at their respective conventions in the early months of 1991. The four

10. Minutes of the Meeting of Provincial Conference Executive Members (Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba Mennonite Brethren Conferences) in Respect to the Issue of Mennonite Brethren Biblical Education in Canada (region east of British Columbia) at Post-Secondary Level, 6 January 1990, Vol. 59, Fld. 6., CMBS, Winnipeg.

11. Minutes of the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches Council of Boards, Regional Higher Education Proposal, 1 February 1990, Vol. 189, Fld. 24, CMBS, Winnipeg.

provinces accepted the recommendations, albeit not without significant opposition by some, particularly because of ongoing concern about the implications for Bethany and Winkler Bible schools.

At the 1991 convention, the Canadian conference took the final action to transfer the governance of MBBC in 1992 to the four provinces that had accepted the proposal. A detailed prospectus of what was referred to as the "New College" was tabled and a transitional schedule was outlined.[12] Now, the difficult work of appointing a new board and defining the nature of the college and establishing the many other details necessary for the launching of the new college began. A special caucus of delegates of the four provinces met during the Canadian convention.

The end of the old and the beginning of the new

Closing an institution is never easy. There are too many stakeholders and people with vested interests. Many alumni, faculty, and students of MBBC obviously had a strong interest in finding a resolution that would see essential continuity, even if there might be some adjustments. There were many others who had supported MBBC financially and philosophically and who hoped for a smooth path into the future. The college represented much of what they believed was best for the denomination.

But there were also many who felt that the college had run its course and that it was no longer needed by the Canadian Mennonite Brethren constituency. The decision of the British Columbia conference to opt out was the clearest demonstration of that. Elsewhere, some felt that the college and the two remaining Bible schools could not all survive and that at least one of the institutions would have to be sacrificed—Bethany or Winkler. The pain of closing one or more of the institutions was inevitable. Which one would it be?

The final years of MBBC were marked by a great deal of uncertainty and growing apprehension internally. Students were assured that they would be able to complete their anticipated program, but the uncertain future nevertheless threatened to quell their enthusiasm and sense of belonging. Students were also affected by the morale of the faculty who were very distracted from their primary task because of the broader developments.

The president's report to the board in February 1989 struck a very optimistic note. It began by stating that "the 1988–1989 year at MBBC has been a year of high hopes and aspirations."[13] The new recreational

12. *Yearbook: Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, 80th Convention* (1991), 23–32.

13. Board of Higher Education, Report #3, 2–4 February 1989, Vol. 59, Fld. 4, CMBS, Winnipeg.

MBBC graduating class, 1989. Front row (l-r): Debbie Wat, Dorli Wiens, Darryl Sboemaker, Denise Braun, Roger Thiessen, Wendy Voth, Janice DeFehr, and David Balzer. Middle row: Brad Nenfeld, Kerry Fast, Dave Heinrichs, Deborah Reimer, Eugen Giesbrecht, Dave Wagner, and George Feenstra. Back row: Peter Vanderwoude, Don McClelland, Paul Heidebrecht, Doug Ratzlaff, Rob Jantz, Arnold Enns, Michael Smart, and William Christian.
(MAID CMBS NP026-31-57)

centre was nearing completion under the supervision of the new campus administrator, Henry Petkau. Later that year, David Balzer was appointed as the new admissions counsellor. In his April report in the *Herald*, President Pankratz summarized the developments of the previous year, projected the direction of the college in six specific areas, and listed four immediate challenges. These included increasing student enrolment, increasing the financial support base, and committing to long-range planning. All of this was still based on the assumption that MBBC would remain a national institution. By the summer of 1989, however, it had become clear that the initial vision was no longer tenable. Pankratz presented a lengthy long-range planning document in July.[14] This document already sketched seven different options for the future of MBBC.

It became increasingly evident that developments were flowing along two somewhat parallel tracks until one terminated and the other became formalized. The first track continued to work with the existing institution and its governing structures, including the Board of Higher Education, the college administration, and the faculty. The long-range planning document of 1989 was the basis of further refinements in the initial period.

The second track involved an *ad hoc* group, sometimes referred to as the "basement group" that began meeting by March 1990. This group usually met in private homes. The first recorded meeting was attended by ten individuals, including President Pankratz and the interim academic dean, Isaac Block. Three issues were identified as agenda for the meeting: 1) future structures of governance and support, 2) program directions for the 1990s for an urban college, and 3) processes that might be helpful in resolving these issues and people who might be part of the process.

The group took note of the fact that the four provinces had agreed to participate in a commission. It did not see itself as working apart from that process but hoped to create a vision that might eventually merge with the official developments. Its main focus was on the vision and nature of a new college, rather than on governance issues. At the 9 May 1990 meeting, six of the participants made presentations relating to discussions with other parties and about strategies that needed to be adopted. The 9 June meeting was attended by many of the same individuals but included two women. Abe Dueck, who had returned from leave, replaced Isaac Block.

A final formal meeting of the *ad hoc* group took place at the home

14. Board of Higher Education Minutes, Report #5, 4–6 July 1989, Vol. 59, Fld. 4, CMBS, Winnipeg.

of Pankratz on 19 June. The group reviewed a proposal that was then revised. This revised proposal used the term "College North" and was submitted to the college board at a meeting on 6 July.[15] There were ten Manitoba representatives present in addition to board members and faculty members. Art DeFehr presented the proposal. The board accepted this draft proposal in principle and prepared a revised document to present to the study commission. The revised document eventually used the term "New College." The informal track, therefore, flowed directly into the developments in 1991 and the appointment of a board for the new college at the caucus of four provinces in July 1991. A number of the ad hoc members became members of the new board in 1991. The interplay of the two tracks became the basis for considerable tension in the final years of MBBC.

Throughout the initial informal process all parties, including the faculty, were kept informed about developments. As indicated, the president of MBBC was fully involved in these discussions and the assumption appeared to be that he would become the president of the new institution. The fact that the president was responsible for the continued operation of the institution that was closing in 1992 while he was involved in the creation of a new college resulted in considerable confusion and anxiety, especially among the faculty. Faculty was apprehensive about whether the president was fully representing their interests or whether he had divided loyalties.

Navigating the final years of MBBC

Faculty minutes reflect an increasing anxiety over the next several years. Probably, the first wide-ranging faculty discussion that reflected the gravity of the situation took place after the end of the 1989–1990 academic year.[16] During the first months of the 1990–1991 academic year, there were extensive discussions in faculty council about the developing proposal. Students were also invited to participate in these discussions.

A series of documents were circulated in the late summer and fall 1990 that refined the vision of the new college, briefly projected program elements, and outlined governance, finance, and transition issues. The names "New College," "College North," and "Midland College" were used in various documents. Faculty were fully involved in discussing these elements. On 30 August, the faculty produced a lengthy document

15. See Board of Higher Education Minutes, Attachment #1, 6–7 July 1990, Vol. 59, Fld. 7, CMBS, Winnipeg; and Summary of ad hoc Meeting, 19 June 1990, Faculty Council Minutes, Vol. 66, Fld. 21, CMBS, Winnipeg.

16. Faculty Council Minutes #41, 11 May 1990, Vol. 66, Fld. 20, CMBS, Winnipeg.

reviewing the College North proposal. Many revisions followed in subsequent weeks.

The deeper underlying concern was what would happen to the faculty. A formative as well as a summative evaluation process was implemented. Faculty asked many questions about the nature and content of these evaluations and what the prospects were that they would be accepted into the new faculty. Pankratz repeatedly encouraged faculty to think positively and to go forward with the anticipation that they would continue. On 6 September, Isaac Block wrote a memo to the faculty in which he expressed serious concerns about the fact that the document did not address the issue of a smooth transition for the faculty. "If faculty matters were taken seriously," he stated, "there would, in my judgement, be a section in Part D that would deal with faculty retention and development during the transition period."[17] He also stated that present faculty should receive first consideration to teach in continuing areas of their discipline and that a severance policy should be adopted.

On 11 October, the personnel committee presented a series of policy issues to the faculty for review. These reflected the heightened concern regarding the future. During the next two months, faculty agenda was mainly concerned with reviewing various documents pertaining to the nature of the new college and preparing a faculty response to the proposals. In January, the faculty met with the board and expressed concerns related to their future. At that time the board also accepted Abe Dueck's resignation as academic dean and his acceptance of a half-time position as director of the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies. This new position was still under the mandate of the Board of Higher Education.

Among the issues that surfaced in the discussions regarding the nature of the new college was the nature and role of music. This reflected the ongoing concerns in the history of the college regarding the philosophy and practice of music. Baerg began the discussion by affirming his commitment to "the best in musical tradition and academic excellence."[18] He referred to the pressures to conform to trends in the evangelical church, including the diminishing role of church choirs in favour of praise groups and popular styles of music. Some were critical of the college-sponsored group called "Vision." How could the college relate to a constituency that was changing drastically in worship and

17. Memo from Isaac Block to MBBC Faculty, 6 September 1990, Faculty Council Minutes, Vol. 66, Fld. 21, CMBS, Winnipeg.

18. Faculty Council Minutes #37, 24 April 1991, Vol. 66, Fld. 21, CMBS, Winnipeg.

music styles? The faculty discussions revealed that they were not united in their opinion about how music should inform the new college.

Pankratz's first term as president of MBBC was to end in 1991. A review process began in the fall of 1990. On 1 February 1991, the board received the evaluation report and recommended that Pankratz be reappointed as president of MBBC "for the duration of this board's mandate." In the meantime, Pankratz functioned as the main administrative person for the new board and the only faculty representative. In early August 1991, Pankratz was formally appointed as president of the new college, although he had been informed earlier that he was the only candidate. Pankratz's position as president of two distinct institutions (one existing and one in formation) during the final year of MBBC was inherently difficult. It was sometimes perceived as a conflict of interest. At the closing ceremony, more than a year later, Harry Heidebrecht characterized the president's role as "like playing two different keyboards with different hands and a different score."[19]

In March 1991, the role of the president and style of administration were specifically addressed in faculty council.[20] Some faculty felt that challenging the president's proposals in committee might isolate an individual. There was also uncertainty about whether the faculty council could make decisions or whether its function was to give counsel to the president. The minutes stated, "In the process of creating New College there has been tension in understanding the role of the president. The president has been working on two levels: 1) responding to the board and external resources; and 2) working with the faculty council." At times, the faculty was unsure about the president's "real opinion on crucial issues about the college."

Concern was also expressed about appropriate management of information and the need for confidentiality, particularly when contentious perspectives were expressed in committees. There was specific concern about how one faculty member's grievance was handled by the personnel committee. Furthermore, it was not always clear whether faculty members on committees should speak as individuals or as representatives of their departments.

At its spring meeting the board decided to appoint a transition team. This team was to identify issues that might be helpful in the transition. The faculty held lengthy discussions concerning the nature of the

19. "Winding Down with a Purpose," *Mennonite Brethren Herald* (7 August 1992), 13.

20. Faculty Council Minutes #27, 8 March 1991, and Faculty Council Minutes #28, 11 March 1991, Vol. 66, Fld. 21, CMBS, Winnipeg.

transition team.[21] With the resignation of Dueck as academic dean, the president recommended that Isaac Block be appointed for the final year of MBBC.[22]

In late April and early May, the faculty met for a series of meetings in which lengthy discussions took place growing out of unfinished business of their 8 March meeting and the policies articulated in the faculty handbook. These meetings were essentially the last formal occasions at which the faculty sought to influence the shape of the new college. The faculty was in a strange place—they obviously had a vested interest in creating something that would secure a place for each of them, but acutely felt the pressure of knowing that they might not be included in the institution they were helping to shape.

Although the faculty agenda was primarily about the new college, the exchanges demonstrated the dynamics that began to characterize the period of transition. The discussions, which became heated and tense at times, focused on the role of faculty council, philosophy of management, and the philosophy of music. In preparation for the 24 April meeting, the president proposed an agenda in which the faculty would work in four groups to discuss the issues. These groups then reported to faculty council. Concern was expressed that the president chaired too many committees, including faculty council. At times, the perception was that certain items were deliberately not put on the table and that this had eroded trust.

On 7 May, the faculty met for detailed discussions on troubling issues. Isaac Block stated that the goal of the meeting was to "bring closure to faculty concerns regarding administration and the issue of management."[23] The document that formed the basis of the discussions was prepared by George Shillington and was entitled "Towards a Philosophy of Management: A Preliminary Notion."[24] The draft minutes, written by Gerry Ediger, were intended as an "in-house" document, but no specific decision was made to keep them confidential. Revised minutes were later produced.

In terms of administrative style and practice, the revised minutes stated that "the present administration seems to have focused a large share of decision-making and influence in the president." It further stated that the administration should be vulnerable in decision making, and that the process should not be managed toward a pre-determined outcome.

21. Faculty Council Minutes #33, 15 April 1991, Vol. 66, Fld. 21, CMBS, Winnipeg.
22. Faculty Council Minutes #34, 16 April 1991, Vol. 66, Fld. 21, CMBS, Winnipeg.
23. Faculty Council Minutes #41a (draft), 7 May 1991, Vol. 66, Fld. 21, CMBS, Winnipeg.
24. Ibid.

Faculty desired an Anabaptist/brotherhood model of management and wanted more participation than was practiced. It debated about whether the issue was "power-related" and how this affected relationships. It concluded by stating that the "structural adjustments being suggested are not motivated by a desire for control or power but rather a concern for effectiveness; to be more relational, not more adversarial." The revised minutes stated, "In the process of these discussions the faculty has become very open and vulnerable to the administration. At the same time, the administration has been quite silent. Real dialogue between faculty and administration involves the two-way flow of conversation, and for this to happen, there is still a way to go."[25]

Several days later, in reflecting on these discussions, the minutes noted that "we may need some space." Furthermore, the minutes stated that "our conversation . . . has been tempered by a level of emotion.[26] The obvious difficulty that the president faced was that he had to represent MBBC and its faculty as well as the interests of the new college. The faculty was sometimes frustrated and felt that it had no significant role in shaping the future.

The final steps, 1991–1992

As indicated above, the board for the new college was appointed in summer 1991. It quickly focused on the vision and mission of the new college. In the meantime, the faculty focused on two main issues. One was the procedure for appointments of faculty for the new college. The second was the nature of the severance policy for those who would not be appointed. Both of these issues produced a high level of anxiety. At the same time, the faculty also continued to work on the details of the program for the new college. On 30 October, Isaac Block presented details of new programs and courses for review by faculty for submission to the president.

In early September, the new board reviewed a document entitled "Proposed Faculty Employment Terms" that was submitted to the faculty on 9 September. After some discussion of the policies, the faculty indicated that they "hoped that the new board would not interpret the feelings of doubt and uncertainty among the faculty as a state of antagonism between the faculty and the new college board."[27]

On the following day, Isaac Block sent a letter to the faculty in which

25. Faculty Council Minutes #41, 7 May 1991, Vol. 66, Fld. 21, CMBS, Winnipeg.
26. Faculty Council Minutes #42, 9 May 1991, Vol. 66, Fld. 21, CMBS, Winnipeg.
27. Faculty Council Minutes #4, 9 September 1991, Vol. 66, Fld. 22, CMBS, Winnipeg.

he reviewed the previous day's meeting and his sense of the mood of the faculty. He suggested that the faculty acknowledge their fears and try to manage them. He continued, "I am suggesting that we covenant with one another that we will not return to the discussions of the termination of our appointments until or unless there is new information." But he also stated that the faculty should not "transfer our experience of disappointment in the Board of Higher Education to the Board of the New College. The new board," he continued, "has gone out of its way to demonstrate good will toward us."[28] On 18 September, President Pankratz sent a memo to faculty to invite them to apply for a position at the new college.

On 20 September, the Board of Higher Education sent a "Notice of Termination of the Mandate of the Board of Higher Education" to each faculty member. The contracts would all terminate on 31 May 1992, and the board of directors of the new college would assume responsibility for the faculty and staff that would be appointed by them.

In early November, the interviews for appointment to the faculty of the new college began. The board of the new college, now named Concord College, met on 8–9 November and made its initial faculty selection from the current MBBC faculty.[29] Three faculty members (Isaac Block, Esther Wiens, and Abe Dueck) were not offered regular faculty appointments. The stated reasons were that "program changes and the need to create opportunities for new program development" necessitated this action.[30] Abe Dueck, who was already half-time director of the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies, was named adjunct professor and taught some courses in succeeding years on a part-time basis. Esther Wiens secured a professorship at Canadian Bible College in Regina, Saskatchewan, and Isaac Block became lead pastor at Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church in Winnipeg. Some faculty were offered "limited" (one-year) contracts and others "unlimited" contracts. Initially, one faculty member did not accept a limited contract.[31]

The subsequent faculty council minutes made only brief references to the issue, but the turmoil outside of regular channels was palpable. There was also considerable awkwardness in the continuing process of preparation for the initial year of Concord College. Isaac Block, as

28. Letter to faculty, 10 September 1991, Vol. 66, Fld. 22, CMBS, Winnipeg.

29. *Mennonite Brethren Herald* (6 December 1991), 15. The records of the meeting are missing from the files at CMBS.

30. James Pankratz Memo to Faculty, Board of Higher Education, and Board of Concord College, 6 December 1991, Vol. 66, Fld. 22, CMBS, Winnipeg.

31. At first, Richard Thiessen did not accept the position he was offered, but later he came to an agreement with the board and continued as librarian.

interim academic dean of MBBC, continued to provide material related to the academic program of Concord College. Other faculty who were not selected were variously involved but sometimes were absent from planning meetings.

For departing faculty members, the future often looked bleak. Although Wiens and Block received a generous severance allowance, they realized that it would be difficult to find an appointment at another similar institution. Other options were few. The feeling sometimes prevailed that Concord College was marketing itself as a continuation of MBBC, whereas legally it was a new institution that had no continuing obligations to tenured former faculty. Concord sought to assure continuity with MBBC in various ways, including assuring alumni that they would be regarded as alumni of Concord. Some of the courses that had been taught by departing faculty continued to be taught at Concord. The transition was difficult, not only for departing faculty but also for the president and the other faculty.

As the final term proceeded, considerable effort went into planning the closing events, including honouring those who were leaving and planning a concluding celebration of MBBC's history at the Canadian Mennonite Brethren convention in Sainte-Thérèse, Quebec. Because the location was far removed from the "home" of MBBC and from the centre of the Mennonite Brethren constituency, it did not permit many of those with significant ties to the past to attend.

Board chair Harry Heidebrecht speaks at the 1992 Canadian Mennonite Brethren convention in Sainte-Thérèse, Quebec, marking the history of MBBC, 1944–1992. (MAID CMBS NP149-01-3610)

The theme of the closing program on 10 July 1992 in Quebec was "MBBC: Community of Nurture." David Ewert, past president and professor emeritus, spoke about "The Birth and Nurture of a Vision." Harry Heidebrecht, a graduate of MBBC during its glory years and board chair, spoke on the topic "A Community of Nurture and Direction." James Pankratz, president of MBBC for its final four

years and now president of Concord College, spoke about "Nurturing a Continuing Vision." Delegates were also given an opportunity to share favourite memories. For many—faculty, alumni, and others—this was a difficult farewell.

The question for many was: Would the new institution be able to transcend the difficulties of the past and build something that retained critical elements of the vision of the former institution while distinguishing itself sufficiently to win the confidence of many of those who had been critical of MBBC? Would Concord College prosper in ways that had eluded its predecessor college? The answers to these questions would not come quickly.

12

From Concord College to Canadian Mennonite University

When Concord College opened its doors to a new student body in the fall of 1992, there was both apprehension and excitement. Much effort had been expended to advertise the nature of the college and to recruit students. When the final numbers were tallied, there was much relief. The number of students actually increased from 167 in the last year of MBBC to 216 in Concord's first year. Although about one-half of these were part-time, the actual course enrolment increased by about 14%.

There was, however, some reason for concern. Much of the increase had come as a result of a large flow of students from the University of Winnipeg, estimated at about 35% of the total.[1] These students were primarily enrolled in the liberal arts or social science courses that were capped at the university. As such, these students had little interest in or commitment to the programs or values of Concord. The administration was well aware of the challenge this represented and anticipated that attendance at chapels and other unique college events might actually decrease.

During the first year of operation, James Pankratz was both president and academic dean. Beginning in 1993, Ed Buller became dean and Neil Janzen became vice president. Dan Block was appointed as director of development.

Enrolment during the second year showed very little change in the pattern set during the first year, although there was an actual decline in course registrations that resulted in a financial deficit of about $50,000. However, in the fall of 1994, the trend became more positive again. The

1. James Pankratz, Memorandum to Board Members, 11 September 1992, Concord College Board Meeting, 23–24 October 1992, Vol. 251, Fld. 10, CMBS, Winnipeg.

Herald reported on the "vibrancy of a rapidly growing college."[2] The enrolment increased to 368, and a financial surplus of about $10,000 was projected. The accumulated deficit at that time was $120,000. The college was still receiving $130,000 from the Canadian conference, but that source of revenue would be eliminated in the following year.

In analyzing the trends, the administration warned that "the distribution of a significant proportion of student registration in the visiting category may well represent a fragile market."[3] The University of Winnipeg was planning to expand its capacity so that Concord could not expect to continue to attract as many students from that institution.

Indeed, in 1995, the enrolment declined significantly again to a total of 240 students. There was a temporary increase again in 1996 (313) but that declined to a total of 245 students in 1997–1998 (154 in Concord degree programs) and 248 in 1998–1999 (176 in Concord degree programs). At the same time, the financial pressures increased dramatically. A School of Discipleship (SOD) was launched in 1998, designed to replace the void left by the closure of Winkler Bible Institute.[4]

The years of Concord College took their toll in terms of leadership of the college. James Pankratz continued as president until 1997. Harry Olfert became interim president from 1997–1999, and John Unger accepted the assignment in the final year of Concord (1999–2000). Personnel in other administrative offices also changed.

The vision and nature of Concord College marked an obvious transition from a Bible college model to a more liberal arts-oriented college model. This was reflected both in the course offerings as well as in the enrolment patterns. Concord still retained a strong core of biblical and theological courses with a Bachelor of Christian Studies degree and a Bachelor of Music degree, but the college no longer had to market itself essentially as a Bible college, as reflected in the new name. The mission statement of Concord was as follows:

> *Concord College is a Christian college offering university education that integrates high standards of academic excellence with the formation of Christian character and worldview.*

2. *Mennonite Brethren Herald* (9 December 1994), 16–17.

3. Dean's Report, Analysis Notes, Enrolment 1994–1995, Concord College Board Meeting, 27–28 October 1994, Vol. 251, Fld. 17, CMBS, Winnipeg.

4. Winkler Bible Institute graduated its last class on 19 April 1997. The decision to close operations of the institution was made on 27 March 1997 when the Committee of Reference and Council of the Mennonite Brethren Church of Manitoba, acting as conference-in-interim, accepted the recommendation brought by the Winkler Bible Institute Board that the school be closed. See *Yearbook: Mennonite Brethren Church of Manitoba, 89th Convention* (1998), 26–27, 38–39.

> *Concord College is a caring community of faith and scholarship, interacting with the contemporary urban, cross-cultural, and international world: preparing students to be servant leaders in the church, the professions, and the marketplace.*
>
> *Concord College fosters a biblical view of life as understood in the Anabaptist and Evangelical traditions inherent in its Mennonite Brethren heritage.*[5]

The most notable difference from the mission/vision statements of MBBC was that the first statement identified Concord as a college offering "university education," thereby clearly prioritizing it as a liberal arts institution.

However, Concord needed to expand its base. The percentage of Mennonite Brethren students was relatively low (approximately 50% in 1993 and 30% in 1996). The main target was still Mennonite Brethren students. Although Concord started with the support of four provinces, the nature of that support was ill-defined, and the question of ownership remained ambiguous. None of the provinces had formally accepted ownership. Finally, on 25 October 1997, the Mennonite Brethren Church of Manitoba formally took ownership of Concord.[6] However, the members of the board still represented a wider constituency. The Concord Society, which met annually, was more broadly represented across the Canadian Mennonite Brethren constituency.

The vision for a cooperative educational venture between the various Mennonite institutions in Manitoba had not died with the transition to Concord from MBBC.[7] In 1995, a task force was created by four[8] Mennonite colleges to explore the feasibility of cooperative education. The same Mennonite Brethren Church of Manitoba convention that accepted ownership of Concord also accepted a proposal to join the Canadian Mennonite Bible College and Menno Simons College in a Mennonite College Federation and to provide $35,000 toward a down payment for the building that was formerly occupied by the Manitoba School for the Deaf.[9] Thus, the groundwork was laid for the creation of the Canadian Mennonite University in 2000. Until 2003, the office of

5. See *Concord College Catalogue*, 1994–1996, 5, Vol. 254, Fld. 1, CMBS, Winnipeg.

6. See Concord College Report, *Yearbook: Mennonite Brethren Church of Manitoba, 89th Convention* (1998), 97–101, 141–173.

7. For a more detailed report, see Helmut Harder, "CMU: The Emergence of a Mennonite University," in *The Blazer: Canadian Mennonite University Magazine* (Fall 2010), 2–7; and Concord College files, CMBS, Winnipeg.

8. Steinbach Bible College was initially part of the feasibility study, in addition to Concord, CMBC, and MSC. See Minutes of Concord College Board Meeting, 3–4 March 1995, Vol. 250, Fld. 7, CMBS, Winnipeg.

9. See Concord College Report, *Yearbook: Mennonite Brethren Church of Manitoba, 89th Convention* (1998), 99–100, 145–154.

president of CMU was still occupied by the heads of the three respective colleges, but, in 2003, this was streamlined and henceforth the office of president was occupied by a single president. Other steps were also taken toward complete integration.

Grand opening of Canadian Mennonite University, 2000. (Photo credit: Aiden Schlichting Enns)

Gerald Gerbrandt, the first president of the integrated university, described CMU as "a University of the Church for the World."[10] Its stated intention was "to be a university, teaching students to explore all knowledge in God's world and inspiring them to serve all humanity."[11] CMU's standing as a university was enhanced when it gained membership in the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC). In 2003, CMU's mission was to be "an innovative Christian university rooted in the Anabaptist faith tradition, moved and transformed by the life and teaching of Jesus Christ."[12]

The transition from the founding Bible colleges to a university did not mean that CMU abandoned the teaching of theology or the preparation for ministry. In addition to continued teaching of undergraduate courses and programs in those areas, it also developed a Graduate School of Theology and Ministry. The latter is analogous to the programs offered by seminaries. CMU also entered into an affiliation agreement with the

10. "President's Message," in *The Blazer: Canadian Mennonite University Magazine* (Fall 2010), 1.
11. Ibid., 3.
12. Ibid., 4.

Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary. Therefore, despite many changes, a significant thread of continuity with the past remained.

Today, CMU is a healthy, widely recognized university with a stable student body and a well-qualified faculty in a wide range of disciplines. Students represent many religious traditions or may not be affiliated with any.

Significant challenges remain. Financial pressures continue despite support from government, the Mennonite constituency, and others. Program priorities continued to be carefully evaluated in the light of CMU's particular vision and mission. But the often distinctly competing visions in the history of MBBC are no longer the focus of CMU as it charts its way into the future of higher education.

13

A History of Competing Visions

The 48-year history of MBBC reveals a remarkable continuity of issues that surfaced and plagued the institution, finally bringing about its demise in 1992 as the last Canadian national educational institution. For a decade after 1992, Canadian Mennonite Brethren still participated in a bi-national seminary in Fresno, which was then replaced by a seminary within the Associated Canadian Theological Schools (ACTS) of Trinity Western University in Langley, British Columbia, with a developing regional campus in Winnipeg.

Whereas MBBC brought together students from across Canada who became leading pastors and ministers in the conference for many years, by 1992 the reality was that most church ministers and leaders no longer had a common educational experience and lacked the loyalty to a national conference that earlier leaders had. By 1992, it could no longer be assumed that the faculty and administrators of MBBC provided much of the glue that held the conference together. Pastors, with a diverse history and training, and lay leaders, often without theological training, now occupied the top executive and board positions. They often had little prior exposure to, knowledge of, or experience across the vast geographical and theological scope of the Canadian constituency. MBBC had often been the flashpoint for issues that stemmed from the increasingly fragmented experiences of the Canadian constituency as a whole.

From 1944 to 1992, probably no program or issue created more debate, tension, and even distrust in the Canadian Mennonite Brethren conference than education. MBBC was at the centre of most of the debate. MBBC needed to find a clear purpose and identity within the larger context of regional Bible schools, seminary education, and Christian liberal arts education. For almost 50 years, MBBC was the only national educational institutional institution operated by the Canadian

conference and was the main provider of leaders, pastors, missionaries, and preachers for congregations and teachers at regional high schools and Bible schools.

The failure to achieve a distinct identity that could be supported by the entire constituency was probably the major reason for the college's demise. But despite that failure to achieve a coherent and central vision, MBBC made a very significant contribution to the life and ministry of the Canadian and international Mennonite Brethren constituency. Furthermore, while administrators and faculty often received most of the criticism for the difficulties the college experienced, the failure was not simply the result of the college's inability to define its own identity but was rooted in the complexities and failures within the larger context of the constituency and its leaders.

There were recurring and overlapping themes that characterized MBBC throughout its history. These sometimes originated internally but often also reflected the themes and realities that engaged the conference as a whole. The polarities in the Canadian conference often came into focus in the debates surrounding MBBC. Many of these were also played out in the religious and denominational experiences of other groups both in Canada and in North America. They also grew out of the social and political fabric of the nation in a period of radical change when Mennonite Brethren became increasingly acculturated and when the memories of an earlier more isolated experience faded. Identities became increasingly blurred and the search for "new wineskins" preoccupied many.[1]

This chapter will seek to summarize and elaborate on the recurring themes and tensions that have characterized the history of MBBC and how these relate to the larger story of the Mennonite Brethren church in North America and particularly in Canada.

Nationalism, provincialism, regionalism, and fragmentation

Loyalty to national or bi-national (North American) institutions and programs was always to some degree in conflict with loyalty to regional, provincial, or even congregational programs. Some of these loyalties were also influenced by the history and experiences of individuals or groups in Russia or other contexts prior to becoming established in North America.

1. See Delbert Wiens, *New Wineskins for Old Wine: A Study of the Mennonite Brethren Church* (Hillsboro, KS: Mennonite Brethren Publishing House, 1965); and W. Marshall Johnston and Daniel J. Crosby, eds., *A Dangerous Mind: The Ideas and Influence of Delbert L. Wiens* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2015).

The General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America was first formed in 1879 and, at that time, only consisted of US member churches.[2] About a decade later, the first churches were established in Canada. In 1909, the conference was divided into three district conferences. Canada became the Northern District conference. As the Canadian membership grew, provincial conferences were also organized.

In 1945, steps were undertaken, largely prompted by the establishment of MBBC, to obtain a charter for the Canadian Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America. This gave the Canadian Mennonite Brethren the legal right to establish educational institutions as well as significant other rights. The path toward greater independence and equality with American Mennonite Brethren was thereby well underway.

By 1954, it was evident that radical structural changes were required at the North American level. This was primarily prompted by the growth of the Canadian constituency and initially focused on programs of higher education. Beginning in 1934, Tabor College was operated by the General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America and, therefore, also served the Canadian constituency. The theology program was an integral part of Tabor College and functioned as a stepping-stone for further theological studies for many. With the emergence of MBBC in 1944, more and more Canadians opted to study there instead of at Tabor. The immigrants of the 1920s felt somewhat culturally removed from their American brothers and sisters. The strong desire to foster the German language was one, albeit not the only, factor that distanced the two constituencies. The result was that a new structure emerged with two national conferences, each with their own educational programs.

The year 1954 proved to be the important turning point in the process of regionalization at the level of the General Conference. Higher education was at the centre of the so-called constitutional crises. The Canadian delegation was determined to sever its ties with the United States and did not wish to continue to support Tabor College, with the possible addition of Pacific Bible Institute in Fresno. As a result, the United States was forced to create its own national conference, somewhat after the pattern already functioning in Canada. The Canadian conference discontinued its role in the governance and direct financial support of

2. See details of structural developments in Paul Toews, "Searching for the Right Structures," in *For Everything a Season: Mennonite Brethren in North America, 1874–2002*, eds. Paul Toews and Kevin Enns-Rempel (Winnipeg, MB: Kindred Productions, 2002), 55–65.

Tabor College. MBBC became the primary institution that Canadians looked to for the theological education of their leaders. In contrast to the US, however, where most churches had professional salaried pastors by 1950, Canadians still were primarily served by lay or non-salaried ministers.

In Saskatchewan and southern Manitoba, the earliest congregations were established by immigrants from the United States or were the result of evangelistic endeavours among immigrants of the 1870s (*Kanadier*) prior to the massive immigration in the 1920s (*Russländer*). The main impetus for the establishment of MBBC came from the *Russländer*, although there were prominent leaders like Abram A. Kroeker, who was not a *Russländer* but who devoted much energy to support the college.

During much of its history, MBBC received less support from Saskatchewan than from the other provinces. This might be attributed to some extent to its unique demographic. Until 1946, Saskatchewan was divided into two areas—a southern district and a northern district—each with their regional loyalties and institutional interests. Eventually, many of the provincial programs and institutions were consolidated within the respective provinces.[3]

The impact of regionalism is most strikingly evident when statistical data of student enrolment of students from Manitoba and British Columbia at MBBC over the years are compared. In 1947–1948, when there were 131 students registered at MBBC, 45 were from Manitoba and 29 from British Columbia. At that time, the Mennonite Brethren membership of the two provinces was very similar and totaled slightly more than one-half of the Canadian membership. By 1957, the British Columbia membership (4,392) was considerably higher than the Manitoba membership (3,546) and the number of British Columbia students (36) had exceeded the Manitoba enrolment (30). In 1958–1959, the British Columbia numbers had surpassed the Manitoba enrolment at MBBC by an even greater number (45 to 33).

However, as confidence in MBBC gradually eroded in the next decade, the British Columbia enrolment declined much more rapidly than the Manitoba enrolment. At the height of the crisis in the 1970s, British Columbia enrolment almost disappeared with only seven full-time

3. This was true in varying degrees for Bible schools, high schools, camps, and other programs. In Alberta, educational programs were consolidated in Coaldale for a time, which had both the Alberta Mennonite High School and the Coaldale Bible School, but eventually both schools closed. Then, Alberta lent its support to Bethany Bible School in Hepburn, Saskatchewan, where a consolidation had already taken place with the closure of the Herbert Bible School in 1957, which amalgamated with Bethany Bible Institute in Hepburn.

students in 1974–1975 and one part-time student. Manitoba had 41 full-time and 93 part-time students. Although British Columbia enrolment gradually increased again in subsequent years, it never again approached the earlier numbers, even though the British Columbia membership continued to increase until it constituted about one-half of the total Canadian membership by the end of the century. In 1985, the enrolment at MBBC was 192 FTE, with only 29 of those from British Columbia.

British Columbia had several high schools and Bible schools during the early years, but loyalties eventually became consolidated around the Mennonite Educational Institute and Columbia Bible Institute (earlier MBBI). Both catered to a larger Mennonite constituency, but their primary supporters were Mennonite Brethren—by far the largest Mennonite denomination in British Columbia. The result was that competition with MBBC became more focused as provincial and regional loyalties took root.

In the 1980s, the developments in education in Canada were newly characterized as "fragmentation." This concept implied that various institutions were unclear about their own purpose and were increasingly driven by how they could capture a greater share of the student market, without much regard for the broader vision and the real needs for a healthy denomination.

Another noticeable trend was the gradual transition from denominational loyalty to congregational loyalty and, with that, a weakening respect and awareness of national leaders. A. H. Unruh, the first president of MBBC, was well known and respected throughout Canada; he travelled extensively and preached wherever he went. This was also true of most of the other faculty during the first decades of the college. Until the 1950s, most congregations had a multiple lay ministry,[4] which meant that they usually welcomed visiting preachers.

As the professional pastoral ministry took root in the 1950s, access to the pulpit became more restricted and national leaders and institutions faced more difficult access to the general membership. Larger congregations soon hired additional staff, many of whom were initially trained at MBBC. Decision-making became more centralized and many congregations adopted an "elder" model of church governance. By the 1980s, some congregations developed into mega churches modeled after the mega churches in the US, often networking with these churches. With additional local resources, programs were expanded, and congregations competed against each other to draw young people and others. Finances

4. These were generally ordained but not salaried.

for national programs were increasingly diverted to support local programs or to support missionary efforts abroad. More competition for resources also came from non-denominational programs and institutions.

Religion and cultural/ethnic boundaries

When Mennonite Brethren came to Canada, they soon realized the new challenges they faced, given the scattered nature of their new reality. In Russia, most of them had lived in fairly tight-knit communities where church and society were integrated, and the boundaries between them and the larger society were relatively neatly defined. Young people attended schools run and staffed by Mennonites. Marriages of young people were mostly within their own religious and cultural community. To be sure, particularly since the 1870s, the pressures by the government to integrate the Mennonites had increased considerably. Attempts to "Russianize" the Mennonites were felt particularly in education and imposed language requirements. But the Mennonites remained a cohesive group despite these pressures.

In Canada, the circumstances were very different. The communities were scattered in the five western provinces. Although in some of the rural communities, Mennonites formed the majority; in most cases, they lived in the midst of people of other religious and ethnic backgrounds. In larger centres like Winnipeg and parts of the Fraser valley or Vancouver, they constituted a small minority and could easily be overwhelmed by those who surrounded them, who were often simply referred to as *die Englishe*. The public schools were governed and staffed by people who were not necessarily sympathetic to the Mennonites. Prejudice against German-speaking Mennonites intensified during the war years. Students rubbed shoulders with non-Mennonites and easily succumbed to the pressures of assimilation. Fears that this might ultimately lead to intermarriage were pronounced.

The story of the college during the first decade demonstrated how the vision for the college became entangled with the so-called culture war, which centered on the language issue but was broader in scope. J. B. Toews left the presidency partly because he did not wish to fight the culture war. Ultimately, the language war was lost. But time would reveal that the fears of acculturation also had implications for the Mennonite Brethren faith as well.

The obvious result of the adoption of the English language was that young people were more exposed to non-Christian practices and values. The movie theaters, radio, and other media did not reinforce Mennonite

values, although they may have forced individuals to exercise more discernment and forge deeper values than was possible with artificial language barriers. But access to the English language and culture also sometimes had the negative affect of opening young people to religious currents that were alien to Mennonites, including North American fundamentalism. Young people began attending Bible schools, colleges, and seminaries that were sometimes quite nationalistic and rejected the historic peace teachings of the Mennonite/Anabaptist movement. Mennonite Brethren evangelistic or mission activities, of necessity, used the English language of the surrounding communities, but also tended to avoid promoting distinctive Mennonite teachings. The college was caught in a broad spectrum of issues that were shaping Mennonite Brethren identity in a new homeland.

The Bible schools and the college

MBBC was initially conceived of as a "higher Bible school." This was intended to clearly distinguish it from the many Bible schools. It was intended to be a more advanced institution that, in part, would serve to prepare instructors for the Bible schools. However, the Bible schools were not under the jurisdiction of the national conference, although for a time the conference appointed a Bible school committee to seek to bring some unity and coordination between the various schools. Later, the Board of Higher Education, which governed MBBC, was mandated to oversee inter-institutional relations. The task proved to be a difficult, if not impossible.

During the first year of the college's operation, eight of the eleven students had completed one or more years of Bible school. In succeeding years, the proportion of students with prior Bible school training continued to be high. But the transition from Bible school to college was not always smooth, and the relationship often revealed suspicion and tension. As early as 1945, J. B. Toews lamented that the Bible schools had not promoted respect and love for the denomination. He also lamented that the different levels of education in the various Bible schools made it difficult to create a smooth and uniform grid for transfer of credit to the college. This situation increased the tension between the schools.

During the early years of H. H. Janzen's administration, there were no serious signs of tension, but, by the mid-1950s, it was obvious that issues remained unresolved. The presence of Bible school instructors on the college board surfaced as a potential conflict of interest issue. The coordination of the programs of Bible schools to allow a clear policy

of transfer of credit to the college was addressed but never resolved. In 1955, however, major issues concerning admission policies and transfer credits emerged in the college committee deliberations. The college seemed to resist greater accommodation, citing its own need to safeguard its accreditation with AABC.

A study committee that was appointed in 1956 was unable to accomplish anything to unify the educational programs of the institutions. It reported that the lack of unity in the conference in its educational objectives had a negative impact on the youth, resulting in fragmented loyalties and influencing some to attend non-Mennonite Brethren institutions. The assumption still seemed to be that most young people could be expected to attend a Bible school.

The education committee at the 1957 convention gave a comprehensive analysis of the various components that could comprise the educational experience of young people. The fact that the Bible schools regarded their purpose as including some preparation for church ministries and missions clearly signaled an important overlap with the college's purpose. The differences between various schools in their goals and the length of their terms was problematic for creating a coordinated system and determining their relationship to the college. The Bible schools were reluctant to give up their individual character that responded to local needs.

The result was that the conference accepted several recommendations, including a continued appeal to unify the educational programs of the Bible schools.[5] But it seemed to make little difference. The committee was concerned that if enrolment at Bible schools and the college did not increase, biblically informed members would become the exception rather than the rule. The responsibility of the Bible schools must be to provide biblical literacy to the laity. Some feared that various professionally trained individuals would replace lay workers in the churches.

The relationship to the Bible institutes continued to be a problematic issue for most of MBBC's life. The Bible schools gradually upgraded their academic programs, appointed more qualified faculty, and changed their name to "college." By the end of the century, Bible schools had almost disappeared from the Canadian scene.[6] Therefore, competition for students and resources among the surviving colleges only increased.

In 1968, a meeting of representatives of the Bible institutes

5. *Yearbook: Canadian Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America, 47th Convention* (1957), 86–88.

6. For a more detailed analysis, see Guenther, "From Bible College to University," 180ff.

and the college resulted in an agreement on the transfer of credit. In 1969, the college board appointed David Neumann as liaison officer. He soon became disappointed and frustrated in his attempts to bring representatives together. Since the Bible schools were provincial or local institutions, he had no authority over them. When he was able to bring some representatives together in 1970, they discussed recruitment practices but were not able to accomplish anything. Another meeting in 1971 identified several problem areas, including the fact that the college and Bible institutes were competing for the same young people and that Bible school faculty were not promoting MBBC. In earlier years, Bible institutes were major feeding institutions for MBBC, but in later years the enrolment from Bible institutes declined and more students enrolled at MBBC immediately following completion of high school. In 1972, the college board adopted a new structure and created an inter-school relations committee with a clearly spelled-out mandate. But the fact remained that the college board had no direct jurisdiction over the Bible institutes.

In 1974, the British Columbia conference established a study commission on higher education. At stake was the possible discontinuation of the so-called "levy system" that guaranteed funding on a per-member basis. Some churches no longer contributed their portion to the national conference. The frustrations and lack of progress continued in subsequent years. When Columbia Bible Institute came under the jurisdiction of two Mennonite denominations in 1970, the Mennonite Brethren were left with only two institutes that were exclusively Mennonite Brethren—BBI in Hepburn and WBI in Winkler. However, by July 1975, some progress was made, and the first inter-institutional consultation was endorsed by representatives meeting in British Columbia. The consultation took place on 16–17 October 1975. Participants included administrators from each of the high schools, Bible schools, and MBBC, as well as three MBBC board members.

The consultation focused on a paper presented by John Redekop entitled, "An Analysis of Institutional Objectives." The key subjects in the discussions included the community life, ethics and discipline, defining the theological base, philosophy of education, and the relationship to the constituency. The only concrete action emanating from these discussions was the production of a publicity brochure that featured all of the Mennonite Brethren institutions and their educational programs. Consultations were held annually in subsequent years and included representatives of the seminary. The second consultation in

1976 focused on a paper by J. B. Toews entitled "Influences that have affected Educational Processes at Mennonite Brethren Schools."

The third consultation in 1977 dealt more directly with issues at the heart of continuing tensions and ambiguities in the relationships between the schools. Each of the schools made presentations on their educational objectives and methods. However, MBBC board members felt that the problematic issues were not really being addressed. "There needs to be a link," the minutes stated, "between provincial endeavours in Christian education and the all-Canadian program."[7] The failure to achieve centralized accountability at the national level was most frustrating for the board.

The consultations from 1978 to 1981 did not focus on the critical issues causing tensions between the Bible schools and the college. In 1981, the board moved to meet with the institutional board members to discuss concerns. A brochure was produced for several years that featured each of the schools. One of the objectives was to try to counter the trend of young people attending non-Mennonite Brethren schools. In July 1981, the faculties of the various schools were invited to participate in a retreat at Camp Evergreen in Alberta where Ian Rennie was the guest speaker. The topics again did not address the divisive issues between the schools. At the 1982 consultation at Bethany Bible Institute, however, each of the schools was asked to prepare a five-year plan that was intended to clarify the uniqueness of each school. Then, in 1983, a consultation in Winnipeg tackled the critical issues between the schools. The specific problem areas that were identified included regionalization, the ethics of recruitment, degree granting, and the conference tiered structure of educational institutions. Participants acknowledged that regionalization had always characterized the conference, but they suggested that the real problem was one of fragmentation. Furthermore, they conceded that individual institutions had the right to upgrade their programs. But institutions also had an obligation to consider and consult regarding the larger implications of their actions for the Canadian conference.

In April 1984, the executive of the board considered a draft statement on "Fragmentation and Regionalization in our Education Institutions in Canada." It stated, "It has been a longstanding understanding that a tiered nature of education exists in the Canadian Mennonite Brethren life. Our high schools deal with one level of education, our Bible institutes at another, and our college and seminary at still other levels."

7. Minutes of the Executive Committee, 21–22 October 1977, Vol. 58, Fld. 2, CMBS, Winnipeg.

The statement also recognized that regionalization had a positive effect in creating a sense of identity and common purpose at the regional level, but it warned about the negative effect of creating understandings that were anchored in a local area and made cooperation with others difficult.[8]

The tension reached a peak as a result of developments at Columbia Bible Institute in Abbotsford. By the 1980s, the membership of British Columbia churches constituted approximately one-half of the total Mennonite Brethren membership in Canada. MBBC relied heavily on student enrolment and on financial support from the British Columbia constituency.[9] Vocal criticism from British Columbia leaders had increased rapidly. In 1984, the board of Columbia Bible Institute proposed significant changes, including accreditation with the AABC, the right to grant theological degrees, and approval for a Bachelor of Theology degree. Somewhat similar changes were taking place at the other Bible institutes, but none were as threatening as those at CBI. The chair and vice-chair of CBI met with the MBBC executive following the inter-institutional consultation to give the rationale for the changes that were being proposed.[10] The discussion revealed that there was considerable disagreement about the desirability of making such changes and the impact they might have on MBBC, CMBC, and on the Canadian conference. Nevertheless, the CBI society endorsed the changes. They were gradually implemented in subsequent years.

At the board meetings in January/February 1985, the board established a commission to plan a consultation on the issue of fragmentation/regionalization in November 1985. In April, the executive moved to ask CBI to consider delaying the implementation of a fourth-year program. The consultation convened at CBI in November and included representatives of the Board of Reference and Counsel, the conference executive, and the provincial moderators.[11] The keynote address, entitled "Unity in the Midst of Diversity," was given by John H. Redekop. Other papers dealt with denominational identity and allegiance, educational alternatives for leadership training, and resources for conference ministries. The discussions were frank and intense.[12] Not

8. Board of Higher Education, 26–27 April 1984, Report #5, Vol. 58, Fld. 10, CMBS, Winnipeg.

9. In 1974, 69 students from British Columbia enrolled at MBBC. In 1975, this declined to 20.

10. Board of Higher Education, 1–4 November 1984, Reports #8–10, Vol. 58, Fld. 11, CMBS, Winnipeg.

11. See Working Copy #3, Further discussion on the Fragmentation/Regionalization Question, Board of Higher Education, 31 January–3 February 1985, Vol. 58, Fld. 12, CMBS, Winnipeg.

12. See "Consultation Grapples with Issues," *Mennonite Brethren Herald* (29 November 1985), 26–27.

only was there competition between Mennonite Brethren institutions for students and resources, but many students were attending non-Mennonite Brethren schools. Leaders who had little training or loyalty to the Mennonite Brethren conference were being recruited. The attendees voted almost unanimously to establish a task force to investigate alternative models for post-secondary education.

Although a consultation was to meet in November 1986 to deal with issues related to the task force mandate, the meeting had to be canceled because of a snowstorm. The January 1987 minutes of the board stated that, although the board intended to continue the inter-institutional meetings, they would be "somewhat different now that CBC was also a college."[13] In fact, the pattern of annual consultations continued for the remaining years of MBBC, but gradually the work of the task force (later commission) sidetracked the previous agenda, and other developments brought about fundamental changes in the structure of higher education in Canada. On 30–31 October 1987, the consultation at CBC focused on long-range planning for individual institutions. It noted that the commission on higher education had not yet come to any conclusions. In 1988, the consultation again was at CBC on the theme of "The Mission of Service." Some intense discussion took place regarding the commission's proposal. The meeting ended with a commitment to try to work together, but the reality was that there was little substance in terms of what this could mean.[14]

Ultimately, the prolonged attempt to coordinate programs was probably doomed to fail. The Bible schools began in an era when high school graduation was not the norm. Eventually, the educational, cultural, and social circumstances changed. The survival of the Bible schools/colleges depended on transforming their programs. Many closed or amalgamated with each other. MBBC was left with very little basis for a claim to be the only Mennonite Brethren Bible college in Canada. In general, MBBC still had a more highly educated faculty and an accredited university program, but these were not enough to establish a distinct identity from the Bible schools. The only real path to unity in the educational system would have been to develop several colleges under a single governance and funding formula. But circumstances had moved far beyond contemplating such a course of action.

When discussions for transforming MBBC into what became

13. Minutes of the Board of Higher Education, 29–31 January 1987, Vol. 58, Fld. 16, CMBS, Winnipeg.

14. Board of Higher Education, Report #7, 2–4 February 1989, Vol. 59, Fld. 4, CMBS, Winnipeg.

Concord College took place, the remaining Bible schools (Bethany and Winkler) and their supporters charged that they were becoming the "sacrificial lambs." Time demonstrated that they were essentially right. By 2015, both schools were closed. To some extent, the Outtatown program at CMU took the place of the less academically oriented programs of the Bible institutes. But the irony is that eventually neither the Canadian Mennonite Brethren conference nor provincial conferences continued to operate either a Bible college or Bible institutes. The only remaining Bible college (CBC) was supported by a board that consisted of members from the two larger Mennonite groups in British Columbia.

Seminary or Bible college?

While the college sought to control the impact of competition with Bible schools at the entry level, it also worked hard to increase its offerings at the graduate level of theological education. As indicated, the most important objective of the college from the beginning was the training of ministers, missionaries, and other church workers. As such, even though MBBC was not identified as a seminary, it essentially had similar objectives as a seminary. At the end of the college's first year, Unruh indicated that eventually it might be able to offer a complete seminary program. Then, in 1947, J. B. Toews referred to the college as the "only positive evangelical school offering college and seminary training in Canada."[15]

Whereas an undergraduate degree, such as the BTh degree, was regarded as a very adequate level for pastors and church workers in the early years of the college, graduate level theological education was becoming increasingly recognized as a necessity. Initially, Canada supported the program at Tabor College, which offered an undergraduate program as well as some graduate level theological education. In 1948, a commission was established to consider the establishment of a joint seminary with the US. However, the Canadians felt that the program offered by MBBC was adequate. They were also concerned that a seminary program would lead to a professionalization of the ministry. In 1954, the Canadians withdrew entirely from joint participation with the US in higher education. In the United States, theological training was transferred from Tabor College to Fresno in 1955, and a formal seminary program was initiated there at the campus of Pacific Bible Institute. Some Canadian students attended the Fresno seminary, while others sought graduate degrees in various other (mostly American) seminaries.

15. College Committee Minutes, 20–22 January 1947, Vol. 57, Fld. 1, CMBS, Winnipeg.

Probably, the first documented reference to the possibility of MBBC offering a BD degree was made by J. A. Toews in February 1957, shortly after he became president. MBBC was, therefore, the first Mennonite school in Canada to consider offering a graduate degree.[16] However, since it was deemed a sensitive issue, Toews was asked not to refer to it publicly. At the same time, the education committee acknowledged that the conference had never seriously considered the need for a seminary. It noted that the (Old) Mennonite Church and the General Conference Mennonites had decided to work together to establish a seminary program. This became the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries, which opened in 1958. It also noted that the professionalization of the ministry could bring separation and division between laity and clergy. But at this point, there was no need to pursue the issue, it concluded.[17]

The question regarding expansion of the college program to include the Bachelor of Divinity degree was discussed briefly at the 1958 convention. J. A. Toews acknowledged that, in 1957, the General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America had instructed the various institutions to continue to operate without changes until a commission had completed its assignment relative to education.[18] However, he asked the delegates to clarify whether they still supported the original purpose of the college to train young people for the "higher calling" to various ministries in the church. The Canadian convention agreed to allow the board to begin planning for a BD program in the future while adhering to the decision not to make immediate changes. This policy of not implementing any changes continued for several years. In 1961, however, the college asked the conference to review the issue because there were many requests for an expanded program.[19]

For almost 15 years, perhaps the most pervasive and controversial issue concerning the future of the college was the seminary question. This was arguably one of the main issues that led to the "mid-life crisis" of the college during Victor Adrian's administration (1967–1972).

In May 1961, the Board of Reference and Counsel of the General Conference prepared a preliminary recommendation to the respective area conferences. That recommendation, which was accepted by the Canadian conference in July, stated that the "present needs for

16. See Guenther, "From Bible College to University," 193.

17. *Yearbook: Canadian Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America, 47th Convention* (1957), 90.

18. *Yearbook: Canadian Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America, 48th Convention* (1958), 87.

19. *Yearbook: Canadian Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America, 51st Convention* (1961), 169ff.

higher theological training should be met by operating a coordinated training program at two campuses—Fresno, California, and Winnipeg, Manitoba." This led further to a recommendation "that the conference accept in principle that we introduce the BD course into our college."[20] The Bachelor of Divinity program was finally introduced into the college in 1962–1963. The entrance requirement was a Bachelor of Arts degree from a recognized institution. Former college students could receive as much as two years of credit.

Initially, it appeared that the program might be successful. Enrolment during each of the first four years was eight or nine students, with a peak of three graduates in 1965. In 1967, Adrian argued strongly against proposals for a unified North American seminary in favour of a cooperative arrangement based in two locations, Fresno and Winnipeg. In 1968, the Canadian conference accepted a resolution to recommend the establishment of a joint US/Canadian seminary in Vancouver. But this attempt failed in the following year. The enrolment in the graduate program at MBBC declined to two or three students each year and no students after 1971.

With the close of the graduate program in theology in 1972, it could be argued that the college lost its primary purpose as envisioned in the early years. Although theological studies continued to be important and college graduates continued to be placed in church ministry positions, the college was no longer the "higher Bible school" (i.e., terminal theological program for church ministry) envisioned by the pioneer leaders. The issue of seminary education in Canada was eventually officially resolved for several decades when the General Conference of North America established a unified seminary program in Fresno in 1975.

During the Krahn era, there was no significant attempt to reintroduce a graduate theological program. During the Ewert era, however, renewed negotiations took place. In 1984, the college board approved a recommendation to explore the possibility of offering the first year of the MBBS (Fresno) seminary program at MBBC. A year later, a formal agreement to offer selected graduate courses was approved. Soon the possibility of offering a one-year Master of Arts degree in theology was explored. Another avenue of offering accredited theology courses soon emerged with the creation of the Winnipeg Theological Consortium in 1987. This allowed several institutions to offer courses that could be part of an accredited MDiv program of the theology department (United Church affiliated) of the University of Winnipeg. None of these

20. Ibid., 167–176.

developed into widely accepted programs for the training of pastors and church ministries in the Canadian Mennonite Brethren constituency.

Fundamental to understanding the underlying factors is recognition of the evolving changes in the nature of church ministries and the educational environment as a whole. The main purpose of the college in its initial years was fairly clear—the preparation of young people for church ministries. The basic but seldom articulated assumption was that the ministries were primarily lay ministries, including church leadership, preaching, evangelism, Christian education (Sunday school, high school, and Bible school teachers), music ministry, and youth ministry. Although some of these were salaried, the focus was clearly not on a professional salaried pastoral ministry. The lay ministry continued to dominate the Canadian scene until the early 1960s, while a professional pastoral ministry was already the accepted pattern in the United States.

When the college began to advocate the expansion of its program to include a BD degree, it could argue that this was in keeping with its original mandate. The training for church ministries now had to take into account the trend toward a professional pastoral ministry. At the same time, however, acknowledging this development led to a need to create a new rationale for the undergraduate Bible college program. To be sure, the college constantly cited statistics concerning the number of college graduates without a BD degree who were serving the churches in various ministries. But it was difficult to maintain that both the undergraduate and the graduate programs served the same purpose. To be viable, an undergraduate program needed a broader objective. Furthermore, it was the undergraduate program that faced increasing pressure from the Bible schools, which were constantly upgrading their entrance requirements, programs, accreditation, and articulated objectives, which often overlapped with the Bible college program.

Liberal arts college?

Offering some liberal arts courses with university accreditation for such courses was an objective that was pursued almost immediately after the college was established. The administration and the board recognized that a credible theology program needed to have a broad base with courses in disciplines such as philosophy, history, psychology, and sociology. But this awareness of the need for a broader education did not mean that the ultimate objective was to offer a full liberal arts degree program. Tabor College, which was a liberal arts college operated jointly by the US and Canada as part of the Mennonite Brethren General Conference

educational program, was seen as fulfilling that need. Many Canadian students studied there, sometimes after completing a program at MBBC and receiving some credit toward a BA degree. The first attempts at university accreditation of arts courses involved negotiations with the University of Manitoba, but these failed largely because the university required relocation to the campus of the university.

During the first years of the college's history, a major concern centered on ensuring that students met the entrance requirements, which meant completing a high school program. High school courses were, therefore, offered until a separate Mennonite Brethren high school developed adjacent to the college. Unruh also occasionally referred to the need for a junior college, but it is unclear what he meant by this.

The first documented reference to the concept of a "general education" for individuals who were not necessarily intending to pursue church ministries came in a college promotional article by J. A. Toews. The purpose of such a program was to provide a Christian worldview, Toews stated. This obviously went beyond the officially stated purpose of the college. The concept of a Christian worldview became more popular in the Krahn era and was more compatible with the vision of Christian liberal arts education. But at that point, it did not appear to create any controversy.

In 1955, the conference noted that congregations were experiencing a tremendous social upheaval, which had led to a cultural and spiritual crisis. A study commission was established to help the high schools and Bible schools work together so that all young people would attend these schools and find their way through these crises.[21] When H. H. Janzen resigned as president of MBBC in 1956, he wrote somewhat prophetically about the changing circumstances and the new challenges facing the college. He predicted that the college was about to experience radical change with a sharp turn toward secular education.

The report of the education committee in 1957 devoted a separate section to the issue of a liberal arts college for the first time. But it was unable to find a solution, even though the young people felt a serious need to address the issue. More studies were needed to come with recommendations.[22]

The report of the education committee in 1958 included some observations regarding liberal arts and the tendency toward

21. *Yearbook: Canadian Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America, 45th Convention* (1955), 132–133.

22. *Yearbook: Canadian Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America, 47th Convention* (1957), 88–90.

professionalization of the ministry. It expressed amazement at how rapidly the enrolment of young people at various universities was increasing. The report warned about the kind of worldly influences that the students might be exposed to in the secular universities. The churches needed to respond to the challenges.

In 1959, the education committee reported that a study conference needed to be held because of the increasing interest among young people in a liberal arts education and in view of the invitation from other Mennonite groups to join them in building a residential college on the campus of an existing university. The subsequent study conference in 1960 addressed topics such as the objectives of a liberal arts school, student and staff potential, location, and costs.[23] The alternatives that emerged included the appointment of a college chaplain, spiritual supervision by local churches, a stronger liberal arts division at MBBC, and a cooperative venture with other denominations.

Although the Ontario conference participated in the early negotiations to establish Conrad Grebel College in Waterloo, Ontario, it formally opted out by 1961. A cooperative venture with other denominations was, therefore, no longer considered.[24] The education committee ultimately recommended the establishment of a liberal arts college that would "enable the individual to make wise decisions in the social, political, and economic areas which are his responsibility as a true witness of Christ." Instead, however, the conference decided to establish a liberal arts department at MBBC and to direct students to Tabor College for the last two years of their general education.[25] In 1961, J. A. Toews reported that the possibility of affiliating with Waterloo Lutheran University (later Wilfrid Laurier University) was being pursued. Former MBBC students had already been successful in receiving credit for courses they had taken at MBBC. The negotiations were successfully completed that year and the delegates accepted a recommendation to change the name of the college to "Mennonite Brethren Bible College and College of Arts." This was required for the college to reflect its dual identity.[26]

The affiliation with Waterloo Lutheran University had some limitations because it involved an institution outside the province and

23. *Yearbook: Canadian Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America, 50th Convention* (1960), 165–168.

24. *Yearbook: Canadian Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America, 50th Convention* (1960), 168.

25. Ibid., 171.

26. *Yearbook: Canadian Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America, 51st Convention* (1961), 175.

because the status of Waterloo Lutheran University was not generally considered equal to that of the secular provincial universities. The next several years marked no major new initiatives or changes. The college operated as a dual institution (Bible College and College of Arts), which was formally imposed by outside forces but seemed to be in keeping with the college's own gradual transition toward seeing liberal arts as a significant separate pursuit. The conference reports indicated that arts enrolment was increasing.[27] In its reporting, the college listed five programs, the last of which was two years toward a degree at Waterloo Lutheran University.[28] However, President Quiring reported that "we have no ambitions at the moment to expand our liberal arts offerings." He continued by stating that "it is our conviction that liberal arts training . . . is a necessary part of the total training for Christian workers." The dual name came under some review,[29] probably more because of its awkwardness than because of fundamental concerns by the board or administration. Some suggested that a simple solution might be to change the name to "Mennonite Brethren College," but no action was taken. The college continued to operate under a dual name until 1983.

Statistics of enrolments of students in public universities revealed a steady significant increase. In 1969, a total of 599 students were attending universities. By 1989, this had increased to nearly 900, representing 61 percent of those attending post-secondary institutions.[30]

In the meantime, a breakthrough came when an association with the University of Winnipeg was completed in 1970. Ironically, this development came during the administration of Victor Adrian, who had begun a vigorous campaign to reduce the liberal arts component of the college and to reemphasize the theological program in a return to the original vision, as he understood it. He viewed the arts department's role as *contributory* to the main purpose, rather than having legitimacy on its own. But the constituency was very divided, and student potential for an undergraduate theology program was limited.

The 1973 proposal to establish a residential college in association with the University of Winnipeg might have led to a model similar to Conrad Grebel College in Waterloo, but this was defeated and left

27. *Yearbook: Canadian Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America, 55th Convention* (1965), 117; and *Yearbook: Canadian Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America, 56th Convention* (1966), 125–126.

28. *Yearbook: Canadian Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America, 54th Convention* (1964), 70.

29. *Yearbook: Canadian Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America, 55th Convention* (1965), 114.

30. See Guenther, "From Bible College to University," 197.

matters as ambiguous as before. It allowed the Krahn administration to place more emphasis on the liberal arts component of the program again. Krahn focused on what he considered a "holistic education." Although he never openly campaigned or advocated that MBBC become a liberal arts college, his philosophy of education was much more in line with a liberal arts education, and he seemed less interested in preparing young people for the traditional ministries in the church. The constituency sensed the change in emphasis, and, even though student enrolment initially increased substantially, the divisions in the constituency deepened.

During the David Ewert administration, the polarization was less pronounced. Nevertheless, the liberal arts component of the program was well established and Ewert sought to avoid the polarities of the past. The quest to create an independent Mennonite liberal arts college in Winnipeg became the focus of attention in the 1980s and developed into Menno Simons College. Although this college did not have a comprehensive program in liberal arts, its relationship to the University of Winnipeg made the option of a BA degree apart from the existing Mennonite colleges more viable. It was one of many components that resulted in the demise of MBBC, the creation of Concord College in 1992, and the founding of Canadian Mennonite University in 2000.

Why was the concept of a liberal arts institution so controversial with Mennonite Brethren in Canada, when Tabor College in the US was more readily accepted in that constituency? Given the perceived overlap with the Bible schools on the one hand, and the reluctance to venture into a full-fledged seminary program on the other, the only uncontested program might have been a liberal arts program. But that was not one that was easily sold to the entire constituency for a variety of reasons. Young people were already finding an easy transition to the secular universities that had well-recognized degree programs. Christian liberal arts colleges were not an accepted part of the Canadian landscape, in considerable contrast to the situation in the United States. In the US, there were already many Christian liberal arts institutions, both private and denominational. Accreditation of these institutions was much easier. In Canada, recognition as an independent degree-granting institution was not easily obtained and continued to be problematic for the rest of the 20th century. The large provincial universities were essentially the keepers of institutional accreditation and were reluctant to allow small Christian colleges into their organization, the Association of Universities and Colleges in Canada, even though most Canadian universities were founded by mainline denominations.

Another important factor was that Canadian Mennonites were much more urbanized than their American counterparts. By the 1940s, there were many Mennonite Brethren churches in or near the larger urban centres such as Winnipeg, Vancouver, Saskatoon, and Toronto. This meant that most students could access university education while living at home, or they could at least attend a church of their own denomination while they were studying. By way of contrast, American Mennonites were still predominantly rural and did not have as easy access to churches of their own denomination when attending urban universities. Tabor College and other Mennonite colleges were generally in more rural settings.

Mennonites have had a long history of somewhat paradoxical attitudes to education. As Peter Hamm has shown, the positive attitude to education usually pertained to its utilitarian role in preparing for professions such as medicine and teaching. It "harmonized with the Mennonite drive for upward social mobility—the urge to 'get ahead.'"[31] Liberal arts education, on the other hand, had a secularizing effect and had little support, despite the fact that more and more young people were exposed to it. Because of this secularizing effect, liberal arts education has been dealt with very gingerly, he stated. The liberal arts were especially perceived to be a threat to conservative theology. It was better to send young people to secular universities, where atheism and heresy were easily recognizable, than to send them to schools where students might be exposed to controversial ideas purveyed by instructors who were not always trusted by the constituency.

The universities, while being secular and often perceived as hostile to Christianity, were a known entity. Countermeasures were available to ensure that young people could be nurtured in their own faith. Organizations, such as Inter Varsity Christian Fellowship, played a major role within the secular universities in Canada. Many Mennonite Brethren students became very active in these organizations. Often this was perceived as more effective than engaging directly with important issues of faith in a Christian liberal arts institution. Harry Loewen, who taught at MBBC in the 1960s, conceded that "a young person who exposes himself to the influence of philosophy, psychology, literature, history, and science will at the end of three or four years be different from what he was when he entered the halls of learning."[32] Mennonite Brethren

31. Peter M. Hamm, *Continuity & Change Among Canadian Mennonite Brethren* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 1987), 166.

32. Harry Loewen, "University Education Dangerous," *Mennonite Brethren Herald* (15 June 1973), 11.

wanted the best of both worlds, a commitment to the traditional faith and life, and an education that would bring prosperity.

In view of all these factors, Canadian Mennonite Brethren were reluctant to put their financial and other resources into a Christian liberal arts institution. Eventually the establishment of a Canadian Mennonite liberal arts institution (CMU) was spearheaded by interested individuals who worked through channels outside of the accepted conference structures.

Theology—Anabaptism, Evangelicalism, and Fundamentalism

Mennonite Brethren have a long history of uncertainty and debate about their true theological identity. In Russia, they were often perceived as more Baptist than Mennonite in their theology and practice, particularly because of their close association with German Baptists and their adoption of immersion as the mode of baptism. Ultimately, they insisted on their Mennonite identity. The first official confession of faith adopted in 1902 was clear in affirming this identity. The main article pertaining to this identity was Article IX which dealt with their concept of the state, rejection of the oath, and love and nonresistance. This confession continued to be the official confession until it was revised in 1975.

When Mennonite Brethren Bible schools were established in Canada, they usually wrote their own confessions of faith or doctrinal statements, which sometimes borrowed from the confessions of North American evangelical and fundamentalist institutions and movements.[33] These usually did not include any reference to the material in Article IX of the official confession but included other statements.[34] MBBC was no exception in adopting its own doctrinal statement.[35] The need to create a specific short confession of faith was already stated in 1944 before the college opened. The college committee decided to adopt the Tabor College confession of faith, adding one article.[36] This statement did not include any specific reference to MBBC's Mennonite or Anabaptist identity. It continued to be included in the annual catalogues until minor

33. Many of these Bible schools, although established mostly by Mennonite Brethren, were actually society schools with membership from other Mennonite bodies.

34. See for e.g., the *Auskunft über die Winkler Bibelschule "Pniel," Die Glaubensgrundlage der Bibelschule, Katalog*, 1934–1935, Vol. 218, CMBS, Winnipeg; and *Alberta Mennonite Brethren Bible Institute Catalogue*, 1964–1965, Vol. 700, Fld. 9, CMBS, Winnipeg.

35. See "Unser Glaubensbekenntnis," *MBBC Catalogue*, 1945–1946, 6–7, Vol. 117, Fld. 1, CMBS, Winnipeg.

36. *MBBC Catalogue* (English), 1944, 8, Vol. 117, Fld. 1, CMBS, Winnipeg. The additional statement read as follows: "We believe that sin is a reproach to any people. Anyone who professes to believe in Jesus Christ yet liveth in sin and does not repent cannot inherit the Kingdom of God."

revisions were made in 1959–1960.[37] Further revisions followed, but it was 1976 before the college included an abbreviated version of the 1975 revised Mennonite Brethren confession of faith. And while doctrinal statements were considered essential, it did not necessarily mean that faculty were always tested for their commitment to these statements, or that they were very conscious of the details within those statements.

It is hard to determine when references to Anabaptism first appeared in relation to the vision of MBBC.[38] However, it was during the era when J. A. Toews was on the faculty that MBBC established an explicitly Mennonite/Anabaptist identity.[39] Toews joined the faculty in 1947 and taught history as well as Bible. During the war, he had spent much time in the spiritual nurture of young men in the alternative service camps. This awakened his interest in the issue of nonresistance. This led to pursuing academic work and the publication of many works related to Anabaptism. His BD thesis in 1950 was on the Anabaptist concept of the church. It demonstrated his growing interest in the work of Harold S. Bender and other (Old) Mennonite scholars. Increasingly, he asserted that the founders of the Mennonite Brethren Church had strongly affirmed their Anabaptist identity. He described Mennonite Brethren as Anabaptist in theology, Baptist in polity, and pietist in spirit.[40] He argued strongly against patriotism and political activism. But Toews also taught systematic theology courses at the college, using Strong's *Systematic Theology* as his main textbook. Augustus Strong was a Calvinist Baptist who taught at Rochester Theological Seminary in New York. Although Toews pointed out areas of disagreement, it was clear that he had not developed a fully integrated and comprehensive Anabaptist/Mennonite theology. It was during Toews's presidency that an article on the "infallibility and absolute authority of God's Revelation" was added to the college's doctrinal statement in 1959, reflecting a major issue of concern among North American evangelicals at the time.

During the first several decades, faculty members reflected considerable diversity with respect to some theological issues, particularly

37. See *MBBC Catalogue*, 1959–1960, 7. Vol. 117, Fld. 2, CMBS, Winnipeg. In the revision, an article was added to the college's confessional statement pertaining to the inspiration, infallibility, and authority of the Scriptures, reflecting the language of North American evangelical or fundamentalist Christianity.

38. J. B. Toews refers to his efforts to search for Anabaptist materials during his presidency (Toews, *JB*, 135).

39. See Abe J. Dueck, "Canadian Mennonites and the Anabaptist Vision," in *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 13 (1995): 71–88.

40. John A. Toews, *A History of the Mennonite Brethren Church: Pilgrims and Pioneers* (Fresno, CA: Board of Christian Literature, General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, 1975), 367.

on eschatology. Some, including Reuben Baerg, H. H. Janzen, and Henry Baerg, were dispensationalist in their theology. This also reflected their generally more conservative or fundamentalist theology. Unruh, the first president, did not teach dispensationalism. When David Ewert was on the faculty, dispensationalist theology was increasingly disavowed, to the dismay of some leaders in the constituency.

During the years of Victor Adrian's administration, theological tension emerged in a new form. Adrian always affirmed the Anabaptist identity of the Mennonite Brethren Church but equally affirmed its evangelical identity. To many, it appeared that his loyalty to evangelicalism took precedence and that he was not strongly committed to Anabaptism. This contributed to the crisis at the college by 1971. During Krahn's administration, however, the Anabaptist identity of the college was reasserted, which in turn was one factor in the growing opposition to the college in the constituency. The denominational process of revising the confession of faith, which was completed in 1999 after more than a decade of work, amply demonstrated that it was not only MBBC but the entire denomination that struggled with its theological identity.

Related to the specific question of Anabaptist identity were various other social and political issues. To what extent should Christians become involved in politics when seeking to further social justice at home and abroad, and when dealing with various moral and ethical issues in society? College faculty tended to be more sympathetic to the agenda of MCC. This agenda was much broader in scope than simply opposing participation in war or becoming politically active. Sometimes the polarities were perceived to be between evangelism and mission on one hand, and peace and social justice on the other hand.

The contentious issues were, therefore, more complex than might first appear. Both terms (Anabaptism and Evangelicalism) have a broad spectrum of definitions and connotations. The tensions within the Mennonite Brethren community reflected many of the tensions in evangelicalism in North America. These dealt particularly with the understanding of Scripture—questions of authorship, how Scripture should be interpreted, the nature and understanding of conversion, and the role of women in the church. Often the enemy was simply understood as "liberalism." Both MBBC and MBBS in Fresno grappled with suspicion and accusations of unfaithfulness to the Scriptures.

The polarities were less pronounced during the Ewert administration, but by then much constituency support had vanished for many reasons, not only uncertainty about the theological identity of the college. The

controversy regarding the theological position of the college continued into the final era under the presidency of James Pankratz. The painful events at the Three Hills convention in 1988 gave ample evidence that a significant segment of the constituency felt theologically alienated from the college.

Music and worship

The music department was arguably one of the most distinct and popular programs of MBBC. The 1945–1946 catalogue included a brief paragraph on the role of music. Music, it stated, was a means to enhance worship. Specifically, it also was intended to prepare song leaders and choir and orchestra conductors. The statement was gradually expanded so that, by 1949, the catalogue stated as follows:

> *Music is given a large place in the College curriculum. The instruction offered meets the advanced music standards of recent years. Intensive study is required in the field of Bible, Music Theory, and Applied Music. A diploma will be awarded upon the successful completion of the three-year course. The course provides opportunity for students to prepare for the ministry of music in the churches, as soloists, congregational song leaders and choir directors; for the teaching of public school music (choral and orchestral); for private music teaching in piano, voice or violin.*[41]

A major reason for the high profile of the music department was the strength of the music faculty. From the beginning, Ben Horch put a unique stamp on the college, ensuring that the college was known for excellence in vocal, choral, and instrumental music. Horch was especially known for his promotion of the so-called *Kernlieder* (core hymns of Mennonite faith). But he also promoted the classical music of the great German composers and of oratorios like *Messiah*, *Creation*, and others. He spearheaded the trend to study music in Germany. Many of his students went to study in places like Detmold. Horch was very involved in the music community in Winnipeg and became widely known beyond Mennonite circles. Eventually, he even became the music producer for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in Winnipeg (1959–1973). College choirs and students participated in many music venues in Winnipeg and beyond.

The music department was also unique in other respects. Until the Krahn era, it was the only program that essentially operated as a separate department, and only briefly, after Horch left, was the department directly headed by the president.

41. *MBBC Sixth Annual Catalogue*, 1949–1950, 23, Vol. 117, Fld. 1, CMBS, Winnipeg.

In general, Horch seemed to win the approval of Mennonite Brethren across Canada. The *A Cappella* choir was well received wherever it travelled. It was effective in promoting the college and brought a sharp increase of talented music students to the college. However, some felt that the music program overshadowed the other programs and hindered their development.

During the years that Victor Martens headed the music department, it continued to promote excellence in music. But Martens did not enjoy the same rapport with the constituency. The focus was on the *A Cappella* choir and the Oratorio choir and their performances. Vocal students excelled in local competitions such as the Rose Bowl and piano students progressed well under competent instructors. Peter Klassen filled in with teaching in areas such as music theory and hymnody.

It was during the Martens era that F. C. Peters presented his "Philosophy of Education" paper to the board (January 1963). The paper included a significant section on the place of music at the college. Peters began the section stating that "probably no program requires a clearer delineation than the music program of the college."[42] He listed four basic objectives for the music program: 1) communicating the gospel, 2) music as an aid to worship, 3) music as an avenue of self-expression, and 4) music as a socializing force. Communication, he believed, was central.

According to the minutes of the board, there was no detailed discussion of music in response to the paper. But in his report to the board, Martens acknowledged that "brethren frequently express their concerns about the type of music used by the choirs of the college." If our responsibility as Christians is to communicate the gospel, then why, people may ask, choose music that seemingly does not communicate due to its structural complexity? Martens's response to such criticism was that music should be an educational force and should be treated as an academic subject.[43] Therefore, it should not simply cater to what the public desired. This was not a response calculated to please much of the constituency.

Victor Martens resigned in the late 1960s because he did not feel that he could endorse the direction proposed under the new administration of Victor Adrian. The music department came under considerable pressure to evaluate its purpose and to assume a role that would tie in more directly with church ministries. The board negotiated with Bill Baerg and

42. Doerksen, "Mennonite Brethren Bible College and College of Arts," 190.

43. Report of the Music Department to the College Committee, 25–26 January 1963, Vol. 57, Fld. 3, CMBS, Winnipeg.

was satisfied that he would be the most suitable candidate. Bill's return to become head of the music department after graduate studies had been in some doubt while the role of the music department was intensely debated. Bill and Irmgard Baerg became the central personalities in the music department for the remainder of MBBC's history, although they were away to complete graduate studies from 1970–1972. Other competent musicians served for shorter times in various assignments.

Throughout his lengthy career at the college, Bill conducted the choirs and taught music history and other music courses, while Irmgard taught and performed piano. The well-established tradition of excellence continued. Many students were attracted to the college because of its reputation in music. The *A Cappella* choir produced a number of recordings. A tradition of cooperation with the Canadian Mennonite Bible College with joint Oratorio performances in the Winnipeg Centennial Concert Hall together with the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra was established. The CMBC music department and choirs were led for many years by George Wiebe, who, together with his wife, Esther, had a strong reputation in the Canadian Mennonite church constituency. The first joint oratorio performance was conducted by George Wiebe in 1965. Bill and George worked together on many projects and began a joint annual music seminar beginning in 1975 to which well-known music personalities from North America and Europe were invited. These included Robert Shaw from Atlanta, conductor of the Robert Shaw Chorale, and Helmut Rilling, a Bach expert from Germany.

Despite the success and good reputation of the music department, however, the department was also the focal point of considerable tension and controversy. The music department was best known for excellence in classical choral music. But North American church music was evolving, and Mennonite Brethren churches were increasingly influenced by the society in which they lived. The music department at MBBC was viewed as reluctant to adapt to contemporary popular styles of music that were more in the folk tradition. Smaller churches could not sustain choirs, and larger churches either replaced choirs with worship bands or introduced more contemporary popular music. The college was criticized for putting more emphasis on performance than on worship and service. As already noted, the most significant attempt to make a radical change was made by Victor Adrian during his tenure as president around 1970. His attempt was strongly resisted by faculty, and the constituency continued to be divided in its support of the music program of the college.

During the Krahn and Ewert administration criticism of the style of

music continued, and the faculty devoted considerable time to discussing how to respond to the changes that were taking place in the constituency. The trends in the churches were broader than simply a change toward more contemporary music. Changes pertained to the nature of worship as a whole, which might be characterized as a "democratization" of worship.[44] Congregational singing led by a worship team, which might consist of a somewhat charismatic leader supported by a guitar, a piano, several lead singers, and a drummer, replaced choral singing. Not much formal musical training was required. The choir tours, which often included a repertoire of Bach cantatas and might include texts in Latin or German, were not always well received. The college music department made no radical changes. College faculty sometimes criticized the content of the lyrics popular in the congregations as theologically shallow. Gradually more variety in the style and content developed, but not enough to satisfy the critics.

Other areas of disagreement—the role of liberal arts, the relationship to other institutions, and theological issues—were of greater concern. And yet, renewed music debates arose in the final era of MBBC when more serious attempts were made to introduce or foster contemporary styles of music and use less traditional music in promoting MBBC in the constituency. Courses in church music and Christian worship were offered in the final years of MBBC.

The faculty—ministers or academics?

The role of the faculty in dealing with the direction and vision of the college varied considerably during the span of nearly 50 years. During the initial period, lasting for about 20 years, the mission of the college remained essentially as set by the founders of the college: namely, to prepare young people for service in the church at home and abroad. The earliest accreditation by AABC, which was achieved in 1950, was basically in keeping with the main focus of the college. There were no major challenges to this focus, even though in practice more and more students enrolled without such a clear goal.

The affiliation with Waterloo Lutheran University in 1961 was preceded by the appointment of F. C. Peters as academic dean with the specific purpose of strengthening the liberal arts department. This move was undoubtedly supported by faculty members, including David Ewert, although it was not promoted as a move away from the original vision.

44. Christine Longhurst was helpful in helping me to understand changes in the nature of worship during these decades.

In general, the board appointed faculty on the basis of recommendations by the president. Later policies were spelled out more clearly. Faculty council discussed potential appointments, which were then formalized by the administrative or personnel committee. The board often scrutinized these recommendations carefully, but seldom rejected them. Therefore, faculty significantly shaped the vision of the college even though informally. The most explicit incident in which the faculty challenged the vision of the president came during the years of Adrian's presidency. The vision of a more liberal arts-oriented college eventually prevailed as reflected in the Krahn era.

Another significant gradual change pertained to the prior education and experience of faculty. In the early years, the faculty was well known in the constituency, often having had previous experience in church leadership and teaching at Bible schools. They were usually ordained ministers, and most were frequent guest speakers in local congregations and at conventions. In later years, more attention was given to educational qualifications. An earned PhD or ThD became increasingly important for college courses to be recognized. This emphasis tended to reinforce the pull toward more liberal arts courses at the college.

Finances

Throughout its history, MBBC relied very heavily on guaranteed contributions by the Canadian conference. These were generated based on a per-member formula (levy system). Although not all churches contributed the full amounts requested, the funding formula worked reasonably well for many years. In 1949–1950, the conference contributed about $13,000 out of a total budget of close to $58,000. The remaining income came from sources such as tuition, meals, dormitory rent, etc. No separate category of donations was listed.[45]

By 1959–1960, the conference contribution to the college budget had increased to $16,000. Donations from churches contributed another $9,906 and private and other donations were $3,755 for a total income of close to $30,000 (apart from internal income from sources such as tuition, room and board). The total operating budget was close to $90,000.[46]

By 1979–1980, the conference grant had ballooned to approximately $300,000 and, by 1990, to approximately $500,000. But by then, donations

45. *Yearbook: Canadian Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America, 40th Convention* (1950), 81–82.

46. *Yearbook: Canadian Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America, 50th Convention* (1960), 13ff.

and grants had increased to about $240,000 with a total budget of about $1,400,000.

In general terms, concerns about finances became more and more significant because of the heavy reliance on conference grants. The proportion of the overall budget of the conference that was spent on education was very high, and many were concerned that other areas such as evangelism and missions should receive a higher share of the budget. A shift in the membership distribution toward British Columbia aggravated the problem, and the fact that British Columbia led the efforts to abandon the levy system beginning in the 1970s is not surprising. Individual congregations also spent more and more on their own staffing and programs.

The Canadian private colleges had no strong tradition of support by wealthy individuals or corporations and could not rely on endowments to compliment regular sources of income. MBBC's dependence on conference and church support meant that debates about vision became very intertwined with conference politics and demographic considerations. Canadian institutions in general did not have a tradition of major private and corporate giving such as was the case in many US schools.

Inter-denominationalism

The issue of relating to other denominations and cooperating with various non-Mennonite Brethren institutions surfaced throughout the history of MBBC. From the beginning, MBBC declared its willingness to accept students from other denominations. Over the entire period of MBBC's history, many students from other denominations attended MBBC. Some were from other Mennonite denominations, while others were from a broad range of denominations, particularly evangelical Protestant denominations like Baptists.

The most significant question that arose repeatedly was the relationship with CMBC, a sister institution with a similar program in the same city. As noted earlier, before CMBC was created in 1947, some informal approaches to establish a joint college were made by leaders in the Mennonite church, but Mennonite Brethren leaders appeared closed to such a venture. Some students from that denomination enrolled at MBBC in the early years and to a lesser extent in later years.

At the formal level, the first significant relationship developed in music. In 1965, the first joint oratorio performance took place. In 1975, the first church music seminar was sponsored by the two institutions

and these cooperative ventures continued for the remainder of MBBC's history. Music faculty sometimes taught courses on both campuses. The success of cooperative ventures in music can largely be attributed to the excellent relationship of the faculties between the two institutions. But it is also true that cooperation in music was less threatening than cooperation in theological education. The two denominations had much more in common in their music heritage. Perceived differences in theology usually did not come to the fore when there were cooperative ventures in music.

Other areas of cooperation were more problematic. An experiment to co-sponsor the annual ministers' course did not succeed. The mini college concept that emerged in the early 1970s was not approved by Mennonite Brethren. An effort begun in 1988 to teach some courses jointly by transporting students between the two campuses did not develop into a sustainable practice. The distance between the two campuses was one major factor making this unworkable, but there were also other factors. On a number of occasions, however, CMBC faculty were invited to teach specific courses at MBBC. George Epp, who later became president of CMBC, was part-time faculty member at MBBC for several years, teaching history and German language.

There were also efforts to work together with other denominations and institutions. MBBC often attracted large numbers of students from the Evangelical Mennonite Conference (EMC) and the Evangelical Mennonite Mission Conference (EMMC). Both had observer participants on the MBBC board for periods of time. There were some, generally less formal, cooperative relationships with Canadian Nazarene College in Winnipeg and Providence College (formerly Winnipeg Bible College). When James Pankratz was first appointed to the faculty at MBBC, he was also on the faculty at Providence College.

A significant attempt to create formal relationships with non-Mennonite institutions came during the administration of Victor Adrian. He was especially interested in cooperative ventures in seminary education with evangelical institutions such as the Canadian Bible College and Canadian Theological Seminary in Regina, Saskatchewan.[47] This attempt was abandoned when Mennonite Brethren decided to form a joint seminary in Fresno. However, the push toward some graduate level seminary education led to a cooperative venture between several

47. The college and seminary—operated by the Christian and Missionary Alliance denomination—relocated to Calgary in 2003, joining Nazarene University College to form Ambrose University College.

institutions in Winnipeg, including CMBC, Canadian Nazarene College, and the theology department (United Church) at the University of Winnipeg, which offered an accredited degree. Only a limited number of Mennonite Brethren students enrolled in this program.

While attempts to cooperate more fully or amalgamate with other institutions eluded MBBC during its history, the seeds for full cooperation came to fruition less than a decade later with the creation of Canadian Mennonite University in 2000. By that time, the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches had essentially relinquished its former role of seeking to shape the educational experience of its young people.

14

The Legacy of MBBC

Any assessment of the legacy of MBBC will vary depending on the perspectives and values of those who review the history and products of the institution. Some begin with the early stated vision that was often repeated in later years, even by those who had already adopted a broadened vision. This approach looked at the number of graduates who entered full-time church ministries, including pastors, music and youth workers, and Bible school/college teachers. Statistics were often cited by MBBC administrators, particularly in the early decades, to demonstrate that the institution was fulfilling its obligation. These analyses usually focused on graduates, although graduation was not the goal for many students because MBBC did not offer a terminal BA or BSc degree. The analysis of graduates for the first 25 years indicated that the largest number (257) had become teachers.[1] The next largest category was pastors (68), followed by missionaries (55). Fifty-five were listed in a variety of other categories such as farming, office work, etc.[2]

The adoption of a joint US/Canada seminary beginning in 1975 changed the expectations of the college to some degree. Nevertheless, many still held on to earlier expectations. Even those with these expectations often ignored the many students who enrolled at the seminary in Fresno after completing studies at MBBC and then entered church ministry. Furthermore, a number of professors at the seminary were alumni of MBBC. At the same time, the upgrading of most Bible institutes meant that some preparation for church ministries took place at those institutions. Many Bible institute teachers were themselves graduates of MBBC. Ironically, they often did not advise their students to proceed to MBBC, sometimes because they now viewed their own

1. A considerable number of these were probably teachers in Mennonite Brethren high schools.

2. *Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Publication of Mennonite Brethren Bible College, 1944–1969*, 60.

institution as equivalent to MBBC or because they felt that MBBC was no longer what it had been when they attended.

Some graduates were at the cutting edge of controversial developments in ministry. Probably, the most controversial issue in later decades was the church's policy regarding women in ministry leadership. The first woman pastor of a Mennonite Brethren church was a graduate of MBBC (Karen Heidebrecht Thiessen). The faculty of MBBC generally was in the vanguard of those favouring women in ministry leadership.

Liberal arts (or general education) were a contested entity throughout most of the college's history. It is much more difficult to assess the legacy of students whose primary interest and involvement was in a broader range of disciplines. Nevertheless, it would not be difficult to name many graduates of MBBC who became well-known and contributed extensively to the church and society in various occupations. These include many high school and university teachers, public service administrators and workers, administrators and workers in various charities such as Mennonite Central Committee, professional musicians, psychological counsellors, and many others.

A detailed statistical analysis of the college's alumni is outside the scope of this study, but there is no doubt that the list of alumni (former students and graduates) who have excelled in various areas of service is extensive. An alumna of MBBC served as executive secretary of MCC binational (Arli Klassen). Another alumnus served as director of MCC Canada for a lengthy period (Don Peters). One was president of Fresno Pacific University (Edmund Janzen), another was the longest serving editor of the *Mennonite Brethren Herald* (Harold Jantz). An alumnus of MBBC was the longest serving president of Columbia Bible College (Wally Unger). One was appointed as the first occupant of the Chair in Mennonite Studies at the University of Winnipeg (Harry Loewen), and his successor was also an alumnus of MBBC (Royden Loewen). The first woman president of CMU is an alumna of MBBC (Cheryl Pauls). One alumnus was a prominent professor in the history department at the University of Calgary before being appointed as a professor at Regent College in Vancouver (John Toews). One of the highly celebrated novelists in Canada (Rudy Wiebe) is an MBBC alumnus who taught at Goshen College before he was appointed as a professor at the University of Alberta in Edmonton.

Furthermore, many students who enrolled in the music program were appointed to teach in conference Bible schools and high schools. Others completed graduate programs and made significant contributions

in music at universities and in the public sphere. Bill and Irmgard Baerg, both of whom studied at MBBC and served lengthy terms on the faculty of MBBC, were well respected for their contributions nationally. At the local level, Bill was a well-known conductor of the Oratorio choir, which often joined the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra for their performances. Irmgard Baerg was the celebrated pianist who played and recorded the Mennonite Piano Concerto with the London Symphony Orchestra. The symphony was frequently played on CBC and other outlets. Howard Dyck, who briefly taught at MBBC, became a popular conductor of several choirs and a broadcaster at the CBC. Len Ratzlaff became professor of choral music at the University of Alberta in Edmonton and conductor of the Richard Eaton Singers. Christine Longhurst made significant contributions to the subject and practice of music and worship, including serving as managing editor of *Worship Together*, the Mennonite Brethren hymnal. She now teaches at CMU. Many other individuals could be listed. Equally important are the many students and graduates who served the church and society in less prominent roles.

The theological legacy of MBBC is difficult to assess. MBBC was generally less conservative or fundamentalist than most Canadian Bible schools. On the whole, MBBC faculty have upheld a stronger commitment to an Anabaptist theology, which was not always appreciated by the constituency. Some of the tensions experienced by MBBC have themselves ironically been a creative force in shaping the lives of many students. Sometimes these forces resulted in cynicism, disillusionment, and a loss of faith. But there can be little doubt that graduates and other students have made many positive contributions to the church and society. They have made the world a better place in many respects.

At another level, the most obvious legacy of MBBC lies in the successor institutions, first Concord College and then Canadian Mennonite University. The degree of continuity may be disputed, but it is obviously there to a considerable degree. Concord College, which emerged in 1992, was not owned and operated by the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches. Its ties were strongest with the Mennonite Brethren Conference of Manitoba. The formal ties of CMU with the Mennonite Brethren conferences (provincial or national) are even weaker, both in terms of governance and direct funding.

The perception by former students and by the Mennonite Brethren constituency of the degree of continuity was also determined by factors such as space and geography. MBBC began and developed just outside

the inner-city boundaries, in the Elmwood area of northeast Winnipeg. That was the area of the greatest concentration of the Mennonite Brethren settlement and where the largest Mennonite Brethren churches were located. MBBC was close to the Elmwood Mennonite Brethren Church and also close to other Mennonite Brethren institutions and offices, such as Christian Press, Gospel Light Hour, and the Mennonite Brethren Collegiate Institute.

The move to the Shaftesbury campus in the Tuxedo area of Winnipeg was a move away from the historic centre of Mennonite Brethren activity and into the centre of influence and activity of the Mennonite Church of Canada. The move created the impression that Concord was joining the Canadian Mennonite Bible College rather than being amalgamated with it as an equal partner. CMBC did not experience the same degree of dislocation and discontinuity.

The theology and music programs are two legacies of the founding institutions carried on by CMU, although with significant changes. CMU has a wide-ranging curriculum, one that includes courses in science, biology, economics, peacebuilding, and others. A graduate program in theology is affiliated with the Mennonite Brethren seminary in Langley, British Columbia, and has significant relationships with other biblical and theological institutions.

The story of MBBC as related in this book is one that has involved a great deal of uncertainty, disagreement about objectives and outcomes, and clashes between personalities. Every institution experiences some degree of conflict. Many institutions have been closed either temporarily or permanently because their programs no longer appeared relevant or because of disagreements about objectives and philosophy of education. In some cases, the tensions have been hidden to a greater degree than others. Student enrolment and financial viability are always impacted by such disagreements. In the case of MBBC, much of the controversy with which it was plagued has been very visible.

Canadian Mennonite Brethren churches have always exhibited a broad spectrum in theological orientation, as repeatedly demonstrated when the conference engaged in dialogue concerning the confession of faith or on ethical questions that have come into focus over time. The disagreements and controversies at MBBC are significantly reflected in the dynamics and polarities in the history of the entire Canadian Mennonite Brethren constituency. Provincial and local institutions exhibited a greater degree of homogeneity within their regions, whereas the college had to engage the sometimes very divergent communities across Canada.

Recent structural and other developments in the Canadian Mennonite Brethren conference have grown out of the divergent forces that have plagued the Mennonite Brethren conference throughout much of its history.

At another level, institutional education is no longer a central concern for Mennonite Brethren nationally or even provincially. Indeed, there has been a substantial erosion of a denominational centre in the Mennonite Brethren conference as a whole. There is no longer a General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America. And the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches has few programs and resources to counteract the weakening denominational glue. Most denominational institutions even at provincial levels have gradually loosened their ties with their parent bodies in terms of governance, guaranteed financial support, and student base. Substantial government funding has become available to CMU, the successor institution of CMBC, MBBC, and Menno Simons College. All denominational institutions have had to rely increasingly on donations from private individuals and businesses. Young people have become more career-oriented in their choice of schools and programs. Denominational boundaries have become more fluid. Cultural distinctives, such as the German language, no longer play a significant role in denominational education.

Dramatic changes in education during the 20th century were inevitable. Some schools have been able to survive the changes with more continuity than others. The disruptive forces at MBBC proved to be too difficult to lead to a smooth transition into a new era. Nevertheless, the history of MBBC stands as perhaps the richest contribution to the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches during the half-century that Mennonite Brethren were struggling to find their identity in a new environment.

List of Faculty Members

Full-time teaching faculty[1]

Adrian, Victor	1962–1973
Baerg, Henry	1956–1962
Baerg, Irmgard	1966–1970; 1972–1992
Baerg, Reuben M.	1945–1947
Baerg, William (Bill)	1966–1970; 1972–1992
Block, Isaac	1981–1992
Dueck, Abe J.	1966–1968; 1971–1992
Dyck, Howard	1969–1971
Ediger, Gerry	1988–1992
Epp, George	1968–1974
Epp, Richard	1977–1979
Ewert, David	1954–1972; 1982–1988
Giesbrecht, Herb	1958–1990
Guenther, Allen	1967–1970; 1975–1981
Hamm, Peter	1970–1973; 1975–1980?
Horch, Benjamin	1945–1954 (1955)
Horch, Esther[2]	1947–1955; 1963–1966

1. The list of full-time or regular teaching faculty is based on criteria that are not clear or consistent throughout the history of MBBC, and the information in catalogues, yearbooks, etc. is sometimes inconsistent. During the early years, the distinction between regular or part-time faculty was not clear, and attendance at faculty meetings was not based on clearly stated criteria. The first extant records of faculty meetings are dated 1 September 1949. In later years, the distinction between regular faculty and part-time or sessional faculty became clearer. Faculty council meetings in later years were usually attended by full-time or regular faculty and by key administrators, such as the registrar, admissions counsellor, business manager, etc. Some of these also had regular teaching assignments. While many part-time and sessional instructors as well as staff made very significant contributions to the college, an accurate list of these would be very difficult or impossible to create.

2. Esther Horch began teaching voice in 1946 as a part-time instructor but later taught additional music courses and was listed as assistant registrar in 1954–1955. From 1963 to 1966, she was appointed as dean of women. Her status on the faculty was often ambiguous.

Huebert, Gerhard	1948–1953
Jantz, Hugo	1976–1980
Janzen, Henry H.	1947–1956
Klassen, Jake	1981–1982
Klassen, Peter	1954–1977
Krahn, Henry G.	1974–1985
Kroeker, Wendy	1988–1991
Loewen, Harry	1965–1968
Loewen, Howard	1972–1977
Martens, John	1974–1992
Martens, Victor	1958–1969
Matties, Gordon	1984–1992
Mierau, Eric	1980–1985
Pankratz, James	1975–1982; 1985–1992
Penner, Erwin	1978–1980
Peters, Frank C.	1957–1965
Polle, Sig	1980–1986
Quiring, Jacob H.	1945–1955; 1962–1966
Ratzlaff, Len	1978–1979
Ratzlaff, Vern[3]	1966–1977
Redekopp, Isaac W.	1948–1954
Regehr, Heinrich J.	1952–1955
Regehr, Henry	1968–1973
Regehr, John	1968–1991
Sawatsky, Roland	1971–1974
Schwartz-Trivett, Linda	1985–1992
Shillington, George	1981–1992
Swartz, Herb	1966–1971
Taylor, Dale	1991–1992
Toews, Jacob J.	1959–1966
Toews, John A.	1947–1967; 1976–1979
Toews, J. B.	1945–1948
Toews, Victor	1956–1958
Unruh, Abraham H.	1944–1955
Voth, Abraham J.	1944–1945
Voth, Henry	1954–1959
Voth, Henry H.	1964–1970; 1980–1981

3. Vern Ratzlaff was dean of students from 1970–1977 and also served as student services director for the Canadian Mennonite Brethren conference during part of his tenure at MBBC.

Wall, Cornelius	1950–1952; 1958–1962
Weaver, Carol	1977–1981
Wiens, Esther	1968–1992

Non-teaching members of faculty council

Note: The individuals listed below were full-time appointees to various positions (admissions, registrar, recruitment, business administration, student services, etc.) and generally also attended meetings of faculty council.

Balzer, David	1989–1992
Derksen, Gerry	1987–1991
Doerksen, Al	1978–1981
Enns, Alvin	1987–1989
Olfert, Harry	1981–1988
Petkau, Henry	1988–1991
Schulz, Doug	1986–1987
Thiessen, Richard	1990–1992
Wall, Robert	1991–1992

Archivist

Note: Although the Archivist was not a member of faculty council, he was a full-time appointee by the Board of Higher Education, sometimes taught courses, and facilitated student research assignments.

Reddig, Ken	1979–1991

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Index of Names and Subjects

A

A Cappella choir, 52, 79, 192-193
Abbotsford, 69, 177
Adrian, Victor, ix, 50, 58, 61-62, 64-74, 76-93, 99, 103, 105-106, 122, 180-181, 185, 190, 192-193, 195, 197, 205
Afrika Missionsverein, 7, 49
Alberta, xvi, 1, 12, 16, 21, 23, 25, 35, 63, 70, 88, 99, 114, 124, 137, 147, 150, 170, 176, 188, 200-201
Allgemeine Konferenz, xvii
Allianz, xviii, 22-23, 209
Allianz Bible School, xviii
Alternative Service, 4, 10, 189
Ältester, xvii
Ambrose University College, 197
American Association of Bible Colleges (AABC), 24, 30, 34, 75, 133, 174, 177, 194
Amerikaner, xv, 2, 209
Amsterdam, xvi
Anabaptism, 39, 66, 105, 117, 122, 188-190
Anabaptist, ix, xx, 39-40, 65-66, 105, 113, 122, 124-125, 127, 158, 164-165, 173, 188-190, 201, 209-210
Andres, Elmer, 53
Associated Canadian Theological Schools (ACTS), 167
Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCA), 165

B

Bach, Johann S., 52, 61, 101, 193-194
Baerg, Bill, xiii, 52, 59, 62, 73, 80-82, 86, 97, 101, 110, 138, 192-193, 201, 205
Baerg, Henry R., 41, 44, 91, 190, 205
Baerg, Irmgard (Braun), xiii, 83, 138, 193, 201, 205
Baerg, Reuben M., 15-16, 21, 190, 205
Balzer, Dan, 148
Balzer, David, 148, 152-153, 207
Balzer, Ruth, 118
Bangladesh, 121, 145
Bartel, Mark, 148
Barth, Karl, 28
Bartsch, Anna (Funk), 2
Bartsch, Henry G., 41
Bender, Harold, 105
Bender, John, 71
Bergen, Irene, 119
Bergen, Mary, 119
Bergen, Val, 119
Berlin, xviii
Bethany Bible Institute (Bethany College), xx, 13, 69, 133, 147-151, 170, 175-176, 179, 210
Bethel College, xviii, 9
Block, Dan, 162
Block, Isaac, 138, 153, 155, 157-159, 205
Block, Isaac H., 41
Block, Jack, 73, 87, 91, 99
Boese, Elsie, 53
Brahms, Johannes, 52, 83
Braun, Denise, 152
Braun, Johann P., 17, 30
Braun, John, 53
British Columbia, xvi, 12, 19, 21-22, 39, 45, 54, 62, 70, 77, 91, 96, 99, 105, 107-109, 111, 116, 118-119, 133, 137, 145-151, 167, 170-171, 175, 177, 179, 196, 202
Bruderthaler, 23
Brunner, Emil, 28
Bueckert, Arnold, 148
Buller, Ed, Jr., 149
Buller, Ed, Sr., 162
Buller, William, 41

Bultmann, Rudolf, 140
Burwalde, xv
Bushkowsky, Herbert, 53

C
California, xx, 26, 50, 78, 97, 103, 181
Camp Arnes, 111
Camp Evergreen, 176
Canadian Bible College, 159, 197
Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), 83, 191, 201
Canadian Mennonite Bible College (CMBC), xvii, 23, 25, 61, 70, 82, 93-94, 96-97, 101, 106, 113, 120, 122, 130-131, 139, 164, 177, 193, 196-198, 202-203, 209-210
Canadian Mennonite University (CMU), ix, xii, 162, 164-166, 179, 186, 188, 198, 200-203
Canadian Mennonite, The, 129
Canadian Nazarene College, 113, 139, 197-198
Canadian Theological Seminary, 197
Capernwray, 148
Catherine the Great, xvii
Centennial Concert Hall, 82, 101, 193
Chair in Mennonite Studies, 112, 129, 131, 136, 146, 200
Chicago, 11
Chortitzer Mennonite Conference, 134
Christ and his Soldiers, 16
Christian and Missionary Alliance, 197
Christian Leader, The, 2
Christian, William, 152
Christmas Oratorio, 61
Clearbrook, 39, 77, 117
Coaldale, xvi, 1, 5, 10, 12, 16, 55, 66, 84-85, 91, 170
Coaldale Bible School, 15, 55, 170
Coggins, James, 141
College Bulletin, 135
Columbia Bible Institute (Columbia Bible College [CBC]), 107, 132-133, 137, 146, 171, 175, 177-179, 200
Concord College, ix, xii, 159-164, 179, 186, 201-202
Concordia Theological Seminary, 64-65
Conference of Mennonites in Canada, 26
Congo, 49
Conrad Grebel College, 43, 184-185
Creation, 83, 191
Crimea, xviii, xx, 9, 210
Crosby, Daniel J., 168, 210
Crucifixion, The, 16

D
Dalmeny, xv, 55
Dalmeny Bible School, 55
Darby, John Nelson, 28
DeFehr, Abram A., 114
DeFehr, Art, 149, 154
DeFehr, Cornelius A., 17, 19-20, 27, 57-58, 140, 209
DeFehr, Janice, 152
Derksen, Evy, 119
Derksen, Gerry, 109, 207
Detmold, 52, 191
Dick, David, 41
Dick, Hedy, 53
Dick, Henry J., 103, 114
Dick, Peter, 16
Direction, 74
Dirks, Gerhard, 41
Dirks, Victor, 66
Dispensationalism, 61, 64, 190
Dispensationalist, 190
Doerksen, Al, 207
Doerksen, John, 53
Doerksen, John George, 46, 192, 209
Doerksen, Leonard, 53
Driedger, Walter, 53
Dueck, Abe J., xvii-xviii, xx, 2, 23, 39-40, 62, 95, 97, 106, 114, 121, 123, 125, 130-133, 138, 153, 155, 159, 189, 205, 209-210
Dueck, Elfrieda, 53
Dueck, Harold, 114
Dueck, Heinrich, 4
Dueck, Henry H., 90, 93-94, 96, 103-104
Dueck, Peter P., 41
Duerksen, David D., 57, 60
Dugard, George, 21
Dyck, Bill, 118
Dyck, C. P., 41
Dyck, Howard, 82, 86, 90, 201, 205
Dyck, Nick, 41
Dyck, Ruth, 149

E
Eastern Mennonite University and Seminary, xviii, 122
Ediger, Gerry, xvi, xx, 2, 18, 149, 157, 205, 209
Edmonton, 200-201
Ein deutsches Requiem, 52, 83
Ekkert, Hane-Lore, 119
Elijah, 52
Elkhart, 122
Elmwood, xvi, 16, 136, 202
Enns, Alvin, 207
Enns, Arnold, 152
Enns, Delbert, 118
Enns, Heinrich H., 41
Enns, Marianne (Foth), 118
Enns-Rempel, Kevin, 169, 211
Ens, Adolf, xvii, 209
Epp, Bernhard, 41
Epp, Frank H., 129
Epp, George, 97, 99-100, 197, 205
Epp, Jacob H., 30
Epp, Jacob P., 41
Epp, John B., 41
Epp, Richard, 205
Esau, Abram, 25
Esau, Peter J., 41
Eschatology, 64, 91, 122, 190
Europe, xvii, 25, 29-30, 193
Evangelical, xii, 15, 21-23, 26, 31, 39, 66, 69, 75-76, 88-89, 94, 105, 117, 122, 127, 134, 155, 164, 179, 188-190, 196-197, 209
Evangelical Mennonite Brethren Church (EMB), 22-23
Evangelical Mennonite Conference (EMC), xii, 69-70, 76, 134, 197
Evangelical Mennonite Mission Conference (EMMC), 134, 197
Evangelicalism, xv, 39, 65-66, 188, 190
Ewert, David, ix, xviii, 10, 28-29, 39, 41, 44, 48, 52, 55, 62, 64, 66, 68, 72, 80, 82, 85-87, 93, 99, 103, 116, 122-124, 126, 128-129, 132, 135-140, 160, 181, 186, 190, 193-194, 205, 209

F
Falk, David, 61
Falk, Viola, 61
Farmer, John, 16
Fast, Bernhard B., 17, 30
Fast, Bill, 114
Fast, George, 114-115
Fast, Kerry, 152
Fast, Paul, 53
Feenstra, George, 152
Fort Wayne, 65
Fresno, xix-xx, 15, 32, 50, 60, 69, 77-78, 91, 103, 105-106, 118, 122, 124, 134, 139, 167, 169, 179, 181, 189-190, 197, 199-200, 210
Friesen, Abraham, 13, 209
Friesen, Alfred, 53
Friesen, Bert, 71
Friesen, David, 112, 129-130
Friesen, Edwin, 134
Friesen, Frank H., 41
Friesen, Jennifer, 149
Friesen, John, 209
Friesen, P. L., 41
Froese, Frank, 41
Froese, John H., 53
Froese, Linda, 53
Froese, Vic, 28-29, 210
Fundamentalism, xv, 39, 105, 173, 188
Funk, Cornelius J., 10, 210

G
Gerbrandt, Gerald, xiii, 165
German Baptist, 18
Germany, xvii, 31-33, 52, 79, 191, 193
Giesbrecht, Eugen, 152
Giesbrecht, Harry, 57-58, 114
Giesbrecht, Herb, 39, 41, 44, 97, 138, 205, 209
Goertz, Johann, 4
Goertz, Peter P., 41
Goertzen, Diane, 119
Goshen, 122
Goshen College, xviii, 200
Gossen, Harvey, 53
Gretna, 3
Guenther, Allen, 39, 62, 82, 99, 106, 118, 205, 209
Guenther, Barry, 148
Guenther, Bruce, xx, 174, 180, 185, 210
Guenther, Henry, 17, 21

H
Halbstadt, 28
Hamburg Baptist Theological Seminary, xvii
Hamm, Bill, 118
Hamm, David, 71
Hamm, Peter M., 99, 106, 187, 205, 210
Handel, George F., 16, 36
Harder, Helmut, 164
Harms, John F., xx
Harrisonburg, 122
Haydn, Joseph, 83
Heidebrecht, Douglas, 123, 210
Heidebrecht, Harry, 107, 141, 143, 156, 160
Heidebrecht, Paul, 148, 152
Heinrichs, Dave, 152
Hepburn, xv, xx, 13, 55, 69-70, 75, 170, 175
Herbert, xviii, xx, 4-5, 33, 52
Herbert Bible School, xx, 170
Hiebert, Joe, 58
Hillsboro, xviii, 2, 55, 168, 210-211
Hinz, Neoma, 53
Horch, Ben, 6, 15-16, 21, 31-33, 36, 51-52, 191-192, 205, 210
Horch, Esther (Hiebert), 16, 21, 32, 43-45, 52, 58, 97, 117, 205
Hubert, Mike, 148
Huebert, Gerhard D., 4, 29, 45, 206
Huebert, Helmut, 114-115

I
India, 28, 85, 105
Indiana, xviii, 65
Indiana University, 135
Institute Biblique Laval, 132
Inter Varsity Christian Fellowship, 187

J
Jamaica, 135
Jantz, Harold, xiii, xx, 9, 14, 22, 28, 39, 53, 73, 91, 114, 116, 200, 209-211
Jantz, Hugo, 118, 206
Jantz, Rob, 152
Janz, Benjamin B., 4-5, 10, 12-14, 17, 25
Janzen, David, 11
Janzen, Edmund, 200
Janzen, Gerhard, 57-58
Janzen, Henry, 53
Janzen, Henry H., ix, 12, 18, 21, 27-30, 33-38, 42, 45, 49, 55, 173, 183, 190, 206, 210
Janzen, Karl, 148
Janzen, Neil, 162
Janzen, Waldemar, 70, 210
Johnston, W. Marshall, 168, 210
Journal of Mennonite Studies, xx, 2, 23, 40, 189, 209-210
Journal, The, 73-74, 113
Jugentblatt, 2

K
Kanadier, xv, xx, 2, 170, 209
Kansas, xviii, 9, 55
Kehler, Walter, 78, 114
Kernlieder, 52, 191
King Memorial United Church, 16
Kirchliche, xvii
Kitchener, xvi, xviii, 28, 68, 210
Klassen, Abe J., xx, 210
Klassen, Arli, 200
Klassen, Benjamin, 53
Klassen, Cornelius F., 17
Klassen, Dietrich J., 41
Klassen, Jacob G., 41
Klassen, Jacob M., 57
Klassen, Jake, 86, 206
Klassen, John, 109
Klassen, John N., 53
Klassen, Peter, 44, 58, 79, 81, 86, 90, 97, 99, 101, 110, 192, 206
Klippenstein, Alvin, 109
Kommerzschule, 9, 28
Konrad, Abe, 115, 117, 120
Konrad, Abe H., 41
Konrad, John A., 57-58
Koop, Art, 149
Koop, Byron, 148
Krahn, Alice (Bauman), 120
Krahn, Henry, ix, 69, 103-108, 112, 114-115, 118-124, 128, 136-137, 181, 183, 186, 190-191, 193, 195, 206, 210
Krahn, Janice, 149
Krimmer Mennonite Brethren Church, 22-23
Kroeker, Abram A., xv, xx, 22, 58, 170, 210
Kroeker, Alfred, 25

Kroeker, F., 41
Kroeker, Wally, xiii, xx, 210
Kroeker, Wendy, 206

L
Langham, 23
Langley, 167, 202
Lehrer, xvii
Lenzmann, Elvira, 53
LePage, Robert, 71
Lethbridge, 16
Letkemann, Peter, 31, 33, 210
Liberal arts, xviii-xix, 40, 42-48, 50, 56-58, 64, 69-71, 73, 84, 87-88, 95-97, 100, 104, 106, 116-117, 124, 126, 128-129, 139, 141, 143, 162-164, 167, 182-188, 194-195, 200
Linden, 23
Loewen, Abram A., 41
Loewen, Barry, 109
Loewen, Bonnie, 118
Loewen, Harry, 56, 61, 68, 112, 136, 187, 200, 206, 210
Loewen, Howard, 97, 118, 206
Loewen, Jacob J., 41
Loewen, Royden, 200
Loewen, Ruth, 118
London Symphony Orchestra, 201
Longhurst, Christine, 194, 201
Luther, Martin, xvii

M
Manitoba, xv-xvi, 3-5, 10, 12, 17, 21, 39, 44-45, 50, 54, 63, 77, 98, 100, 113, 129, 131, 139, 147-148, 150, 154, 163-164, 170-171, 181, 183, 201
Martens, Abram G., 30
Martens, Cornelius, 114-115
Martens, John, 138, 206
Martens, Victor, 33, 44, 51-52, 59, 61, 79, 81, 192, 206
Matties, Gordon, 138, 206
McClelland, Don, 152
McDougal, Ian, 131
McMaster University, 145
McPherson College, xviii
Mendelssohn, Felix, 52
Menno Simons College (MSC), 130-131, 146, 164, 186, 203
Mennonite Brethren Bible Institute (MBBI), 171, 188
Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary (MBBS), xx, 15, 74, 92, 97, 122, 166, 181, 190, 210
Mennonite Brethren Collegiate Institute (MBCI), 15, 65, 202
Mennonite Brethren Herald, 2, 61, 66, 68, 70, 73, 78, 87-88, 90-92, 97-98, 100-101, 104, 115-116, 129-130, 136, 141, 145, 149, 153, 156, 159, 163, 177, 187, 200
Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), 25, 29, 121, 145, 190, 200
Mennonite Church, xvii, 21, 49, 94, 134, 159, 180, 193, 196, 202
Mennonite College Federation, 164
Mennonite Collegiate Institute (MCI), 3
Mennonite Educational Institute (MEI), 171
Mennonite Mirror, 136
Mennonite Observer, 2, 43
Mennonite Piano Concerto, 83, 201
Mennonite World Conference, 39
Mennonitische Rundschau, Die, 2, 18, 30
Messiah, 16, 36, 52, 191
Mierau, Eric, 116, 135-136, 206
Ministers' course, 23, 41, 93-94, 106, 197
Minnesota, xv, 39
Molotschna Colony, 22

N
Nazarene University College, 197
Nebraska, xv
Netherlands, 25
Neufeld, Arnie, 71
Neufeld, Brad, 148, 152
Neufeld, Herb, 143, 149
Neufeld, John J., 41
Neufeld, John M., 17, 30
Neufeld, Konrad, 148
Neufeld, Nicholas J., 17, 21
Neufeldt, Leonard, 53
Neumann, David, 91, 175
Neumann, Jody, 149
New York, 11, 189
Nickel, David, 53
Nigeria, 135
Nikkel, Jacob J., 41

Nikkel, James, 71
North Kildonan, xvi
Northern District, xviii, 1, 3-6, 12-13, 15, 169-170

O
Oklahoma, 105
Olfert, Harry, 123, 138-139, 163, 207
Olive Leaf, 34
Ontario, xvi, 1, 5, 12, 15, 21-22, 28, 42-44, 78, 88, 98, 137, 147, 149-150, 184
Ontario Mennonite Bible School, xviii
Oratorio choir, 33, 36, 52, 61, 101, 192, 201
Oregon, 13
Outtatown, 179

P
Pacific Bible Institute (Fresno Pacific University), 15, 24, 35, 169
Pankratz, James, ix, xiii, 106, 121, 125-126, 130, 138, 140-143, 145-147, 149, 153-156, 159-160, 162-163, 191, 197, 206
Pankratz, Marvin, 149
Pauls, Alice, 53
Pauls, Cheryl, xiii, 200
Pauls, P., 41
Pauls, Val, 119
Penner, Alvin, 41
Penner, Archie, 69
Penner, Erwin, 118, 206
Penner, Henry P., 41
Penner, Maxine, 109
Penner, Peter C., 41
Peters, Cornelius C., 4, 17
Peters, Don, 200
Peters, Frank C., 30, 43-48, 52, 54, 56, 58, 62, 64, 85, 91, 97, 117, 192, 194, 206
Peters, Gerhard W., 4, 62
Petkau, Henry, 153, 207
Pia Disideria, 65
Pierce, Valerie Krahn, 120-121
Pietist, 18, 65, 189
Plett, A., 41
Plett, Brian, 119
Poetker, Henry, 25
Poettcker, Henry, 25
Polle, Sig, 118, 136, 206
Portland, 13
Prairie Bible Institute, 35
Prediger, xvii
Pries, Gerhard D., xx, 4, 210
Prins, Andy, 118
Protestant, xvii, 196
Providence College, 197

Q
Quebec, 132, 150, 160
Quiring, Jacob H., ix, 4, 14-16, 21, 30, 33, 36, 41, 55-58, 60-61, 65, 88, 92, 206

R
Ratzlaff, Doug, 152
Ratzlaff, Len, 201, 206
Ratzlaff, Vern, 62, 70, 82, 97, 100, 118, 206
Reddig, Ken, 207
Redekop, John, 73, 90, 96, 175
Redekop, Joyce, 53
Redekop, Naomi, 149
Redekopp, Henry W., 58, 62, 83, 114
Redekopp, Isaac W., 41, 206
Redekopp, Nickolai, 41
Reformation, xvii, 105
Regehr, Heinrich J., 4, 206
Regehr, Henry, 99, 206
Regehr, Henry A., 41
Regehr, John, ix, 62, 82, 92, 95-98, 101, 103, 138, 206
Regehr, Louise, 53
Regehr, T. D., 26, 210
Regent College, 200
Regina, 108, 159, 197
Reimer, Deborah, 152
Reimer, Edwin, 9, 210
Reimer, F. D., 41
Reimer, Gerhard J., xviii, xx
Reimer, Jacob W., 28
Reimer, Margaret, 9, 210
Rempel, Valerie, 123, 210
Rempel, Walter, 71
Rennie, Ian, 176
Richard Eaton Singers, 201
Rilling, Helmut, 83, 193
Rochester, 11
Rochester Theological Seminary, 189
Rosthern, 3
Rosthern Junior College (RJC), 3

Roxburgh, Robert, 100
Russia, xv-xviii, 18, 23, 39, 105, 168, 172, 188, 209
Russian Bible Institute, 28
Russian Revolution, xv, 26
Russländer, xvi, xx, 2, 13, 15, 23, 55, 170, 209

S
Saskatchewan, xv-xvi, xviii, xx, 2-4, 12-13, 15, 21, 33, 55, 63, 70, 105, 108, 147, 150, 159, 170, 197
Sawatsky, Roland, 82, 99, 206
Sawatzky, Bernhard W., 4
Sawatzky, Ingrid, 61
Schellenberg, Elizabeth, 149
Schlatter, Adolf, 9
School of Discipleship (SOD), 163
Schroeder, David, 25
Schroeder, Helmut, 53
Schroeder, Leonard, 53
Schroeder, William W., 41
Schulz, Alex, 148
Schulz, Doug, 137-138, 207
Schulz, Liese, 21
Schwartz-Trivett, Linda, 138, 149, 206
Scottdale, 2
Seattle Pacific College, 105
Sharon Mennonite Collegiate, 118
Shaw, Robert, 83, 193
Shillington, George, 138, 140, 157, 206, 209
Shoemaker, Darryl, 148, 152
Siebert, Paul, 109
Siebert, Phil, 109
Siemens, Heinrich H., 41
Smart, Michael, 152
South America, 25
Southminster United Church, 16
Spener, Jacob, 65
St. Andrews College, 113
St. John Passion, 52
St. John's College, 113
St. Matthew Passion, 52, 101
Stainer, John, 16
Steinbach Bible College (SBC), 70, 76, 164
Stobbe, Lillian, 114
Strasbourg, 105, 210
Strong, Augustus, 189
Sukkau, Gerhard, 4
Swartz, Herb, 62, 70, 73, 82, 206
Switzerland, xvii

T
Tabor College, xviii-2, 12-13, 24, 31, 34-35, 44, 48, 55, 74, 105, 169-170, 179, 182, 184, 186-188, 210
Taylor, Dale, 206
Thielman, Karen, 119
Thielmann, Katie, 102
Thielmann, Gerhard, 4
Thielmann, Heinrich, 30
Thiessen, Brad, 149
Thiessen, J. J., 26
Thiessen, John, 71
Thiessen, Karen Heidebrecht, 200
Thiessen, Richard, 159, 207
Thiessen, Roger, 152
Three Hills, 35, 99-100, 114, 124-125, 140-141, 191
Tiessen, Paul, 88
Toews, Anne (Peters), 17
Toews, Heinrich P., 11, 15, 17, 19-20, 26, 30
Toews, J. B., ix, xix, 9, 13-21, 24-27, 29-30, 106, 172-173, 176, 179, 189, 206, 209-210
Toews, Jacob J., xix, 44, 58, 206
Toews, John, 200
Toews, John A., ix, 1, 4, 25-26, 30-31, 39-41, 44-45, 49-50, 52, 54-56, 58, 62, 64-66, 73, 109, 115, 180, 183-184, 189, 206, 209-211
Toews, John A., Sr., 1
Toews, John E., 123, 210
Toews, Mary, 25
Toews, Paul, 169, 211
Toews, Peter R., 115
Toews, Teana, 53
Toews, Victor, 41, 206
Toews-Nafziger, Elfrieda, 39, 54, 65, 211
Toronto, 26, 28, 187, 210
Trinity Western University, 167
Tschongrav, xx

U
Ukraine, 28
Unger, A. P., 41
Unger, Agnes, 53

Unger, John, 163
Unger, Lydia, 53
Unger, P. A., 41
Unger, Wally, 107, 200
United Church, 16, 36, 78, 134, 181, 198
United College, 39-40, 42, 55, 78
University of Alberta, 200-201
University of British Columbia, 45, 119
University of Calgary, 56, 200
University of Manitoba, 17, 39, 44-45, 183
University of Minnesota, 39
University of Washington, 105, 210
University of Waterloo, 43-44
University of Winnipeg, 39, 78, 80, 83, 88-89, 96-98, 101, 106, 108, 112, 129-131, 133-134, 139, 146, 162-163, 181, 185-186, 198, 200
Unrau, Dan, 9, 211
Unruh, Abraham H., ix, xix-xx, 3-6, 9-13, 16-17, 19, 21, 28-30, 32, 41, 58, 60, 171, 179, 183, 190, 206, 211
Unruh, Abram A., 2
Unruh, Annie (Enns), 2
Unruh, Dave, 109
Unruh, Frieda, 17
Unruh, Vic, 109

V
Vancouver, 77-78, 100, 104, 172, 181, 187, 200
Vanderwoude, Peter, 152
Virginia, xviii, 122
Voice, The, 33-34, 66, 73-74
Voth, Abe B., 73
Voth, Abraham J., 11, 206
Voth, Henry, 33, 41, 51, 206
Voth, Henry H., 58, 62, 82, 206
Voth, Toby, 57-58
Voth, Wendy, 152

W
Wagner, Dave, 148, 152
Waldheim, xv, 23
Wall, Cornelius, 44, 207
Wall, Heinrich, 16, 21
Wall, Robert, 207
Waltner, Erland, 39
Warkentin, Cornelius C., 13
Wat, Debbie, 152
Waterloo Lutheran University, 45, 78, 184-185, 194
Weaver, Carol, 207
Weltanschauung, 76, 89
Western Baptist Theological Seminary, 13
Westminster Theological Seminary, 65
Wiebe, Esther (Hiebert), 193
Wiebe, George, 61, 82, 193
Wiebe, J., 41
Wiebe, Johann J., 41
Wiebe, Katie Funk, 123, 210
Wiebe, Lori, 119
Wiebe, Margaret, 71
Wiebe, Mark, 149
Wiebe, Orlando, 62
Wiebe, Peter, 53
Wiebe, Rudy, 39, 200, 211
Wiebe, Susan, 71
Wiens, David B., 17
Wiens, Delbert, 74, 168, 211
Wiens, Dorli, 152
Wiens, Esther, 53, 56, 62, 69, 97, 138, 149, 159, 207
Wiens, Frank J., 41
Wiens, Hartmut, 71
Wiens, Johann G., xviii, xx
Wiens, William, 41
Wilfrid Laurier University, 44, 55, 184
Willingdon, 143, 145
Willms, Rudie, 53
Winkler, xv-xvi, xix-xx, 2-5, 9-10, 15, 18, 49, 55, 69, 77, 147-151, 163, 175, 179, 188, 210
Winkler Bible Institute (WBI), xv, xx, 2, 4-5, 9, 49, 77, 147-151, 163, 175, 179, 210
Winnipeg Bible College, 113, 197
Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, 82, 193, 201
Winnipeg Theological Consortium, 181
Wohlgemut, Peter, 149
World War II, xv-xvi, 3, 39, 72

Y
Yarrow, xvi, 12-13, 15

Z
Zentralschule, 9
Zionsbote, 2

"Much more than an institutional history, Dueck skillfully crafts the unique story of Mennonite Brethren Bible College—a national school operated by the Mennonite Brethren in Canada for almost 50 years—as a lens through which to examine the complicated relationship that institutions of higher education have within the life of a denomination. For decades, the school not only played a highly influential role by providing a common theological ethos and experience for hundreds of leaders, pastors, missionaries, and teachers, but it also repeatedly found itself at the centre of the often intense internal dynamics within a faith community wrestling with change. An instructive read for educators and denominational leaders alike."

— BRUCE L. GUENTHER

Professor of Church History and Mennonite Studies, MB Seminary, Langley, BC

ABE DUECK is academic dean emeritus of Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg, Manitoba. He was born in Coaldale, Alberta, and studied at various institutions, including the Mennonite Brethren Bible College, the University of British Columbia, and Goshen Seminary. In 1971, he received his PhD in religion from Duke University in Durham, North Carolina.

Dueck taught at MBBC for 23 years and served as academic dean for 15 years. In 1992, he became the director of the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies and later served as the executive secretary of the Mennonite Brethren Historical Commission for several years. He has published a number of articles in books and academic journals and has edited several books relating to Mennonite and Anabaptist history and theology.

This book explores the guiding vision of MBBC as it was conceived in the early 1940s and as it evolved and became an issue of intense disagreement and conflict through the years. MBBC was the main program supported by the Canadian Mennonite Brethren conference during the college's existence (1944–1992), and, as such, its story reflects the theology, worship, and polity of the conference during those years.

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